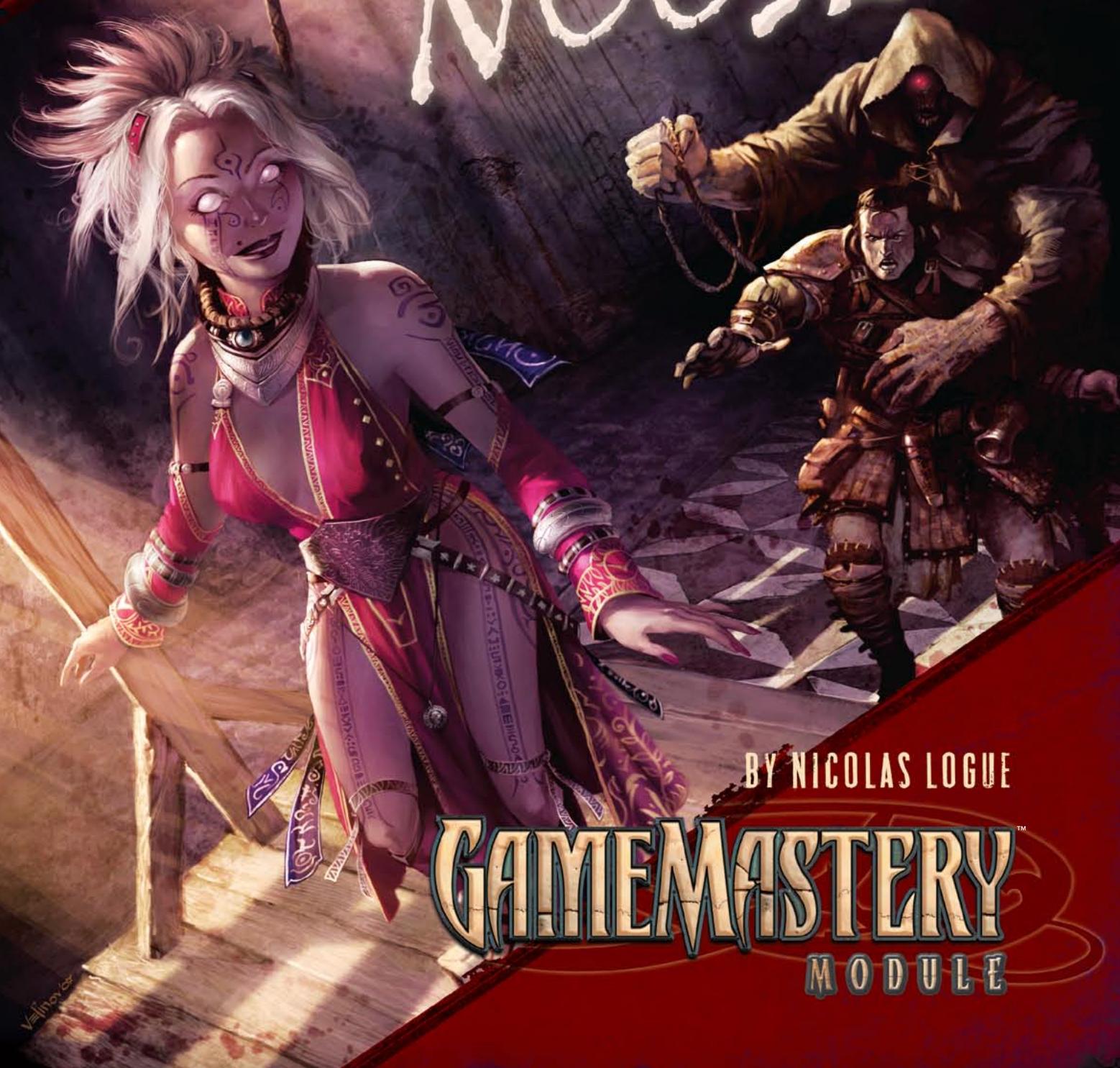


A 3.5/OCG ADVENTURE FOR LEVEL 1

U2



HANGMAN'S NOOSE™



BY NICOLAS LOGUE

GAMEMASTERY™
MODULE

Level One



Beldrin's Bluff Courthouse

Level Two



Basement



One square = 5 feet



HANGMAN'S NOOSE

GAMEMASTERY MODULE U2

URBAN ADVENTURE

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U2: Hangman's Noose is a GameMastery Module designed for four 1st-level characters. By the end of this module, characters should reach 3rd level. This module is designed for play in the PATHFINDER CHRONICLES™ campaign setting, but can easily be adapted for use with any world. This module is compliant with the Open Game License (OGL) and is suitable for use with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game.

The OGL can be found on page 31 of this product.

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Absalom is an old city and no stranger to murder. Throughout its history, countless men, women, and children have met horrible ends in its darkened alleys, shaded tenements, and abandoned buildings. They choke on their own blood until their bodies surrender up their souls, but they never leave. Absalom's dead linger. They dance in shadows at the edge of lantern-light. They peer between the cracks of creaking floorboards. Their phantom breath sends shivers down the spines of the living.

No home in Absalom is without its haunts, ghosts, and whispers. The sounds of a weeping child from the attic in the dead of night, the moans of a tortured maid issuing from the basement of a crumbling manor, and the croaking rasp of a strangled man just beyond a bedroom window—all are heard for a moment amid a night's storm and then swallowed up by thunder or silence. Some dismiss them as fancy or imagination, but we know better. The dead lurk all around us, in air and shadow, between the walls and right at your back. They watch while you sleep, and wait, moaning in the dark, united in their tireless hatred of the living.



THE PATHFINDER CHRONICLES

Adventure Background

Beldrin's Bluff was once the shining center of Absalom's wealthy elite. Resting atop the Precipice District, the district offered patrons of high-end restaurants, gentlemen's clubs, and ladies' teahouses a breathtaking view of a glittering sunset on the water and, if the clouds cooperated, a magnificent green flash as the horizon swallowed the sun.

Now the bluff is a smattering of ramshackle manors, open lots of twisted weeds, and broken cobblestones. The district courthouse is a decrepit four-story gothic relic of the bluff's bygone days. Several years ago, erosion sent two blocks of Beldrin's Bluff crumbling from their cliff-top perch, sloughing like dead skin from the city's peak into the crashing tide of Absalom's harbor below. Residents fled the once-charming district of shops, teahouses, and theaters for fear the entire Precipice Quarter might follow suit. During the chaotic, fearful days following the collapse, many strange events transpired in Beldrin's Bluff. Fortunes disappeared, murderers slaughtered innocents, and families splintered, all in the grips of anarchy and terror. Of all these wild transpirations, perhaps none is more steeped in impiety than the swift trial of Jarbin Mord and his subsequent execution by hanging.

The Mord Murders, a double homicide of mother and son, shocked the city. The gruesome axe-slayings are still discussed in

hushed tones around hearth fires ten years later. The trial that followed was a virtual circus of accusation, conspiracy, innuendo, and slander. The eventual conviction of executioner Jarbin Mord, father and husband of the victims, was one of the grossest miscarriages of justice in the entire history of Absalom's jurisprudence. The instigators of the farce doctored evidence and buried their sins in the bedlam of the bluff's evacuation.

Mord's trial was peculiar in more ways than just its inequity. It is the first and only murder case held in the very building where the victims were killed. Jarbin was the groundskeeper and executioner of the courthouse, and his lovely young wife and six-year-old boy were hewn to pieces in his attic apartment above the courtroom where he stood trial. Every week, on "Noose Wealday," Mord put on his black wool hood and carried out executions for the court. After his trial, he was hung from the very gallows he once tended.

The case of Jarbin Mord was the last to see the bar in the district courthouse. The doors were locked tight the next day, its windows nailed shut with boards, as if the crime against justice could be covered up and forgotten. Ever since, on windless nights, the old courthouse creaks and passersby catch a glimpse of a pale form skulking beyond the boarded windows. Those few neighbors who scoffed bravely

at the cliffside collapse and planned to continue residing near the abandoned courthouse moved on in short order after the first few disappearances. The details of the strange events that precipitated their flight remain untold except for two words: "The Croaker." Ever since his hanging was carried out, those who wander too close to the courthouse can still hear Jarbin Mord rasping through his crushed throat—the sound of breath pushed over bone and rot, a miserable inhuman echo of life.

Five years after the trial, a famed cleric of Sarenrae led a band of adventurers into the moldering courthouse. Seeking glory and hoping to prove they were Absalom's greatest heroes, they decided to banish the restless soul of Jarbin Mord to the Abyss. The expedition was much talked about among all echelons of Absalom. Scullery maids giggled and swooned over Father Kelgaard's blond locks and crystal blue eyes; guardsmen cheered on their captain, the imposing Grisdom Twin-Axe; and nobles lauded one of their favored scions, the highborn wizard Sashrala Vortrum. The best and brightest of Absalom marched into Beldrin's Bluff Courthouse at sundown on the anniversary of Mord's hanging.

At dawn the next day, only Grisdom emerged. Blind, his eyes hulled from his face, the guard captain cradled a lantern with Sashrala's decapitated head stuffed inside, a still-lit candle in her silently screaming mouth. Demands for an account of the night's events only solicited senseless fragments from the tatters of Grisdom's mind: "The Hangman... a neck for a neck... hate never forgets... show me the way out, Sashrala! Show me the way!"

No one has crossed the courthouse threshold since. Fear spread from the place like a sickness, until even the most stubborn holdouts to keep their quarters in Beldrin's Bluff departed or died off. Once Absalom's most vibrant district, the bluff is now a ghost town. The silence of its streets is broken only by the rasping wind.

Now the tenth anniversary of the Mord hanging approaches, and few have forgotten the case or the horrific events of five years past. Citizens mark their calendars and children at play sing eerie songs.

"Wealday, Wealday, Hangman comes for you, Ole Broke-Neck Mord, gonna hang you too."

Adventure Summary

Either by their own volition or through some confluence of fate, the PCs find themselves trapped inside the Beldrin's Bluff Courthouse on the eve of Noose Wealday ten years after Mord swung from his gallows. Mord brought them there along with eight other citizens of Absalom who played roles in his wrongful conviction. Within an hour, the first juror turns up dead, and it soon becomes obvious the rest (including the PCs) will follow. The tormented spirit of Jarbin Mord, now a hideous strangled undead called the Croaker, stalks the jury.

Jarbin is innocent of his family's murders and he wants the true criminals to face the justice they so neatly avoided by pinning the crime on him. The evidence needed to convict the man who murdered Mord's wife and child, and those who conspired to see Jarbin swing, is spread about the courthouse interior. The PCs race against the Croaker's hunger for deadly vengeance, probing the darkest corners and murky depths of the haunted courthouse in search of pieces of the puzzle. As they search, their fellow jurors meet grisly ends at the end of the Croaker's noose.

With the night halfway spent, two men arrive at the courthouse, lured by forged blackmail letters. One is the true murderer of Mord's family and the mastermind behind his mistrial. If the PCs fail to discover who killed Jarbin's family and directed the mockery of a trial, they swing at sunrise just as the innocent hangman did ten years past.

Introduction

A leaning monument to the district's pain, this four-story courthouse is a crumbling marvel of cracked plaster and chipped marble. Once a testament to justice wrought in shining white stone, the courthouse is now a crushed dream, its wretched exterior corrupted by a bloated evil festering within.

Rainwater from a recent downpour mixed with mulch oozes from ruptures in the rock like pus bubbling from a wound. The structure of the eastern wing of the upper floor buckled long ago, and now the bell tower tilts perilously, appearing as though it might careen to the ground below at any moment. Two massive pillars frame the heavy oak doors of the court. The pillars' surfaces run with cracks and fissures like so many burst

veins. The doors sag in their archway like the drooping eyes of a madman. The surrounding structures long ago fell in upon themselves in supplication to the creaking courthouse.

A salt wind blows up the precipice and rakes across the tangled weeds of Beldrin's Bluff. The whole building groans as the wind blows, its tortured lamentation fading to a rasping hiss as the wind ebbs. This croaking murmur never completely fades away. The sun sets in the west, the last slivers of twilight painting the courthouse blood red as darkness creeps closer.

A truly potent introductory adventure can paint the entire tone of a campaign and forge unique relationships between party members. In *Hangman's Noose*, each of the PCs is related by blood to one of the original twelve jurors present at Mord's trial. For this reason, you should work with your players to craft backstories for the PCs that fit with this adventure. The actual four jurors have already passed away or are no longer in the city, and so the four PCs are chosen in their place to sit the jurors' box on the gruesome anniversary of Jarbin's death. The *en media res* introduction begins with a montage of fragmented nightmares before the PCs suddenly awaken in the jurors' box in area 2. Svethe, the "juror" aiding Mord in his terrible retrial, drugged and kidnapped the PCs, bringing them to the courthouse in a drug-induced stupor.

After they see the exterior of the haunted courthouse in their mind's eye (given in the text above), the PCs each experience one more vision—a different one for each character. Each vision holds clues to unraveling the mystery of the Mord murders and mistrial, but these clues are not particularly useful unless the PCs share them with one another. This is a mechanism for bringing four disparate PCs together. To increase the drama of the adventure, take each PC aside and reveal his dream to him separately. Every PC relives an expanded version of the nightmare vision at some point during his exploration of the courthouse (like a flashback in a movie) to help him put the pieces together.

Vision 1

The courtroom buzzes with nervous anticipation. Dozens of eyes, from the crowd behind you and the jurors' box across the aisle, focus on you. The expressions range from contempt



Designer Notes

THE HORROR, THE HORROR

Let's face it: fantasy RPGs don't lend themselves well to survival horror. It's difficult to run a truly terrifying adventure in any system, truth be told, and the secret has very little to do with mechanics and everything to do with atmosphere and narration. For optimum fear-factor, turn down the lights and play by candlelight alone when you run *Hangman's Noose*. Gather a collection of music to shiver the soul with dread (the *Bram Stoker's Dracula* soundtrack is a favorite of mine). Consider banishing the battle mat to ensure tactics take a back seat to immersive terror. Practice your best imitation of the horrible rasping sound made by the antagonist of *The Grudge* for when the Croaker makes his appearance. Take dramatic pauses where you will (silence is often more terrifying than any sound), and refuse to give the PCs solid information about what they see and hear. Remember that it's dark, and a wind is blowing through the courthouse. Uncertainty is terrifying in and of itself, so don't always describe things as if the PCs are in a well-lit room with a perfect understanding of their surroundings. Choose a gaming environment that lends itself to the game if possible (a basement, an attic, or an old building close to your house—no trespassing please). Get the group together early for your game and watch the scariest movie you can think of, or play an hour of *Resident Evil* or *Silent Hill* to set the mood-dial to trepidation and terror. Oh, and definitely play late at night when the rest of the world is still: there is no better time than the witching hour to run a survival horror game.

to pity, but there is no forgiveness in their faces. The magistrate slams down his gavel repeatedly and snarls for silence. The murmur of the crowd relents as the stocky magistrate draws up to his full height, smoothing a silver beard with one hand as he sets down his gavel and focuses on you with shining green eyes.

"Jarbin Mord. For the brutal and savage slaying of your own wife and six-year-old boy, it is the verdict of this jury, with which I concur

URBAN LEGEND

If any of the PCs are natives of Absalom or spent a considerable amount of time in the city, they no doubt know the legend of the Hangman. Additionally, as the anniversary of Mord's hanging draws near, stories circulate and townsfolk murmur of the rasping darkness in Beldrin's Bluff. Consult the following to ascertain what the PCs know or hear about Mord or the courthouse if they attempt a bardic knowledge or Knowledge (local) check:

DC 10: Beldrin's Bluff Courthouse is haunted by the vile spirit of a brutal murderer who was the last man to swing on its gallows. Jarbin Mord killed his wife and son with an axe, then he swung from the very gallows he tended as executioner for ten years. A band of adventurers led by Father Kelgaard of the Church of Sarenrae braved the courthouse five years ago, but only one of his band survived—a burly human named Grisom Twin-Axe, and his mind was shattered by the harrowing experience.

DC 15: Mord's trial was swift, held amid the chaos of the abandonment of Beldrin's Bluff after an earthquake collapsed several blocks of the district into the sea. Little evidence was brought forward in his defense, and his execution was carried out at sunrise the day after the guilty verdict was reached.

DC 20: Many whisper that Mord did not kill his family, but rather was framed for the crime and wrongfully executed. They say his tormented spirit prowls the courthouse, yearning for justice.

DC 25: The jury was carefully selected by Judge Silman Trabe for the trial. Many among them had their own reasons for seeing Mord swing, and rumor has it more than one member of the jury was placed there to help point the others toward a guilty verdict.

wholeheartedly, that you shall hang by your neck until dead. May the gods take mercy on your blackened soul."

Vision 2

A clack of wood on wood is followed by a whip crack of rope drawing taut. The crunch of vertebrae echoes off the walls. A man's booted

feet twitch freakishly as his last breath rasps from his ruined throat in a choking death rattle. You suddenly realize the man is you, and you look down in horror at your own twitching legs. The crowd jeers with delight and laughs as you rasp your last.

Vision 3

A hulking man is hunched over in this dark dreary corridor of cold flagstone, his back to you. His right hand works feverishly, sawing away at something unseen with a blood-slick shortsword as he gibbers: "Show me the way, Sashrala, you can do it. Use your magic to show me out of here. I love you. I love you so much. Just please show me the way!" With a final wet snap of sinew, blood pools at the man's feet and he hefts the gory head of a beautiful elven woman. "Thank you, Sashrala. I love you." The man cries and laughs at once as he kisses her still-working lips and then thrusts her head forward like a lantern. The poor woman's eyes still blink in disbelief; you get the horrid sense she can still see as her mouth trembles out a vain and silent plea for mercy. Her body lies in a pool of blood flowing freely from her hacked neck. Her right arm is outstretched, her finger pointing toward something beyond the darkness.

Vision 4

A cloaked figure enters a small attic. A voluptuous woman with dark features sits in a rocking chair, swaying as she hums and knits a sweater for a small child. She looks up, alarm on her face, as the figure closes, its back to you as it advances toward her. Slowly the alarm changes to horror as the figure looms over her.

After these nightmarish visions visit them, the PCs awaken in the courthouse.

Slowly, the vision fades away as you return to consciousness, but the sight that greets you is almost as disturbing. The dying gray light of sunset peeks through slits in the boarded windows, barely illuminating a yawning courtroom replete with pews and a towering bench covered in cobwebs. A shadowed mural on the domed ceiling above depicts Iomedae in her shining plate mail of gilded sunlight, locked in mortal combat with Norgorber,

Calistria, and Asmodeus, holding the trifecta of evil at bay with her shining sword. You find yourself in a jurors' box, and you are not alone. In the other chairs, figures stir in the darkness, each emerging from troubling dreams into a new nightmare.

If you prefer a more traditional approach to bring the PCs into this adventure, consider one of the following alternative adventure hooks.

In the Footsteps of Lost Heroes: The PCs, for their own reasons, are determined to get to the bottom of what exactly happened to the three adventurers who entered the courthouse five years past. One party member might have been a young disciple of Father Kelgaard who hopes to determine what happened to his childhood hero and test his faith by braving whatever horror befell Father Kelgaard. Another PC might be the recently returned son of Grisdom, gone for the past five years and returned to find an answer to his father's madness in the creaking old courthouse. Another might be a one-time suitor of Sashrala, or perhaps her childhood friend, come to pay last respects to her in her final resting place.

Test Your Mettle: Either to join a guild, prove to their masters that they are ready to learn higher mysteries of sword or spell, or for other reasons, the PCs are dispatched to the courthouse on the eve of Mord's hanging. This could be an excuse by jealous superiors to rid themselves of the PCs or a genuine test of their abilities.

The Mord Killings

Jarbin Mord had nothing to do with his family's grisly slaying. Instead, an ambitious young barrister named Alastir Wade murdered them. Appointed to a mandatory two-year term as district prosecutor in order to pay off the debts he incurred during his flamboyant days at the Absalom Academy of Law, Wade sneered at his post and wallowed in misery in the courthouse. He was a talented young barrister, eager to join some merchant prince's entourage and reap the pleasures that come with such a position. Two years in public service seemed like a lifetime. The only perk of his job was ogling the pretty young wife of the court groundskeeper (and Wealday executioner) Jarbin Mord.

Malene Mord was a raven-haired woman with fiery Varisian blood, an ample bosom, and dusky eyes that hinted at animalistic passions. Alastir Wade wanted to know her intimately, but despite her wanton facade, Malene spurned the barrister. No one knows what she loved in her droopy-faced executioner of a husband, but she remained true.

Alastir seethed. He was not accustomed to rejection and soon became obsessed with Malene. When the executioner was out, Alastir paid his apartment a visit, fully prepared to ravish Malene in front of her six-year-old son. She proved too fiery for him to subdue and drew a line of blood from his face with a knitting needle. Rage and humiliation seized him at once, and before he knew entirely what he was doing, he gripped the handle of Jarbin's wood axe. When he had finished, Malene's body lay strewn about the room in pieces. Alastir's sharp mind refocused and his ophidian sensibilities ran the gamut of possible schemes to evade the law he knew so well. The boy needed to die, to leave no witnesses, and so young Gabe Mord fell, screaming, to the axe. Jarbin Mord was known around town as a taciturn harbinger of death with a drooping mouth and a lazy eye. As disliked as he was misunderstood (by all but his sweet Malene), it did not take long for the wolves to circle and the blame to be cast. They thought Old Hangman Mord lost his mind and took an axe to his boy and lady-love. It was easy enough to believe, especially in the bedlam that followed the cliffside's collapse.

The trial that followed was a cruel jest. Beldrin's Bluff's magistrate, Silman Trabe, a rotund bushy-bearded human with shining green eyes, never much liked Mord. Cowed by Alastir Wade's enterprising mind and connections to Absalom's seedier personalities, Silman Trabe oversaw a miscarriage of justice that resulted in a short drop and sudden stop for old Jarbin Mord. Alastir Wade, Silman Trabe, and their co-conspirators (the members of the jury) brushed the evidence of their evil deed under the pews and locked the courthouse tight, hoping no one would ever go prying.

PART 1: THE HAUNTED COURTHOUSE

After the PCs awaken in area 2, Mord's deadly retrial begins. The Croaker is content

to watch the PCs and their fellow jurors at first, allowing Svethe to poke and prod them into revealing their parts in the conspiracy to hang Mord. This offers the PCs the chance to explore the courthouse and get to know their fellow captives.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury

The PCs are joined in area 2 by seven jurors, all of whom sat in on the trial of Jarbin Mord ten years ago, and one plant, who is responsible for bringing them here. The jurors have spent the last ten years of their lives striving to forget their dishonorable role in that mock trial, but a sin of such excess cannot be washed away by any amount of time, drink, or delusion. Now they have been brought back to pay for their crimes.

The jurors and the PCs did not simply appear here. One among them, pretending to be in the same situation, drugged and kidnapped each one. Svethe was Mord's only friend in life, and after the executioner was hanged he swore he would help his friend see justice. He plotted for years, waiting for the ten-year anniversary of his old friend's death to spring his trap. He arranged for each of the jurors (and the PCs) to be drugged and dragged them back to the district courthouse to face Mord and their own transgressions against justice. Svethe hides among the jurors, impersonating one in order to keep tabs on the rest and ensure the truth of Mord's family's murder is brought to light.

Each of the jurors is detailed below.

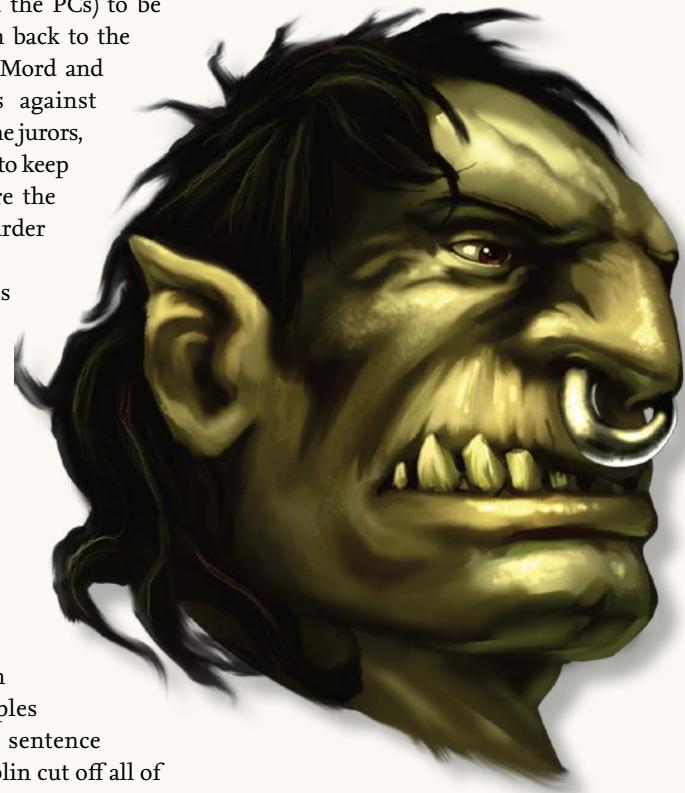
Halgrak Five-Toes:

Halgrak did not want to kill an innocent man. A massive half-orc smith, Halgrak owed Alastir Wade a lot of money and entered the plea of guilty to erase his debt. He's called "Five-Toes" because Malgrim Hurkes, Alastir's "debt collector," leaned on him hard before his scruples buckled and he agreed to sentence Mord to death. The hobgoblin cut off all of Halgrak's toes on one foot and kept them in a jar until his debt was cleared, gleefully returning the severed digits to him after

THOSE PESKY ODD PLAYERS

Running *Hangman's Noose* with a party of three or five players presents some unique challenges. The adventure is designed with four visions and twelve jurors. If you have three players, combine visions 1 and 2, giving both as one vision to a single player. In addition, you need to create another NPC juror to add to the mix. To make this simple, have the juror be one who was merely charmed by Patrissa, and therefore you need add no further clues to explain his personal motives for hanging Mord. Be sure to decrease the difficulty of some of the encounters in this adventure if you have fewer than four players.

If you have five players, add another vision, supplying an extra clue of your choosing, and remove Tablark Hammergrind from the NPCs (although he adds flavor to the adventure, he is the least important juror). If you have six players, remove Tablark and Madge.



Halgrak



Ebin

he sent an innocent man to the gallows. Halgrak's low Charisma makes him seem odious, and when the truth comes out he appears as little more than a selfish half-orc who sent a man to death because he owed some dirty money. If the PCs investigate further, however, they find out that Halgrak has a family, and he borrowed the money only after he could find no work for months and needed the coin to feed his children and wife. He held out against condemning Mord even after they took his toes. It was only when Malgrim Hurkes threatened his children's lives that Halgrak gave in.

Halgrak is a large half-orc with a broad, strong face and tousled mass of wiry dark hair. His frame is imposing but his shoulders hang dejectedly. Life has not been kind to Halgrak and he cannot summon the will to stand up to those who put him in his place. He is a curmudgeon to the bone, certain everything will end horribly, and holds no hope of survival. He nay-says every plan of action the PCs hatch and doom-speaks their every undertaking. He knows he has perpetrated a horrible wrong and he knows he's going to pay the price. A DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check is all it takes to reduce Five-Toes to a blubbering mass, at which time

he admits he was strong-armed into voting guilty by Malgrim. If a character succeeds on a DC 25 Diplomacy check, the PCs learn why he sent Mord to the noose (not because he feared more brutalization at the hobgoblin's hands, but rather to save his children).

HALGRAK FIVE-TOES

CR 1

Male half-orc commoner 3

N Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10

hp 10 (3d4+3)

Fort +1, **Ref** +0, **Will** +0

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk light hammer +5 (1d6+3)

TACTICS

Before Combat Halgrak is no warrior, despite his size. He tries to avoid a fight.

During Combat Halgrak tries to quell any threat to his person the best he can with his hammer.

Morale Halgrak flees at the first chance he gets.

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 11

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +4

Feats Martial Weapon Proficiency (light hammer), Skill Focus (Profession [smith])

Skills Profession (smith) +10

Languages Common

Gear leather tool belt, mwk hammer, tongs.

Ebin Blithoddle: A failed jester whose ill attempts at jokes only ever invited beatings and scorn, Blithoddle voted to hang Jarbin out of personal spite (further fueled by the other jurors' urgings). Mord embarrassed Blithoddle in a contest of wit and wiles at the District Councilman's Birthday Feast a few weeks before the murders and subsequent trial. The Councilman claimed "death itself was funnier than Blithoddle" and called up the executioner to engage in banter with Ebin. While Mord was no razor-wit, he easily upstaged the dull Blithoddle.

The little gnome attempts to turn every phrase the PCs utter and tries in vain to make light of the horrible situation everyone awakens to inside the musty old courthouse. His jokes only add to the unsettling atmosphere around them.

Ebin Blithoddle is a jaundiced-face gnome who covers his yellow-tinged skin (one of many symptoms of his alcohol-damaged liver) with poor-quality white makeup that cakes unseemly on his brow and cheeks. His motley is stretched tight over his hanging paunch. Several of his teeth are broken from close encounters with unamused patrons' fists. Malgrim didn't lean on Ebin. Ebin made his own hateful choice to hang Mord based on nothing more than petty spite. A DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check wrings his motives and guilt from the little gnome.

EBIN BLITHODDLE

CR 2

Male gnome bard 2

CE Small humanoid

Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +7, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 12

(+1 armor, +4 Dex, +1 size)

hp 9 (2d6)

Fort +0, **Ref** +7, **Will** +3 (+5 vs. illusion)

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk sap +3 (1d2 nonlethal)

Special attacks bardic music 2/day

(countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1)

Spell-like Abilities (CL 2nd)

1/day—*dancing lights* (DC 9), *speak with animals* (burrowing mammals only)



Patrissa

TACTICS

Before Combat Ebin tries to steal a useful item (potion, weapon, and so on) from anyone he thinks wants to hurt him.

During Combat Ebin tries to stay clear of a fight, lashing out with his sap when the opportunity presents itself.

Morale Ebin flees as soon as he can.

STATISTICS

Str 11, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8

Base Atk +1; Grp -3

Feats Run

Skills Appraise +3, Balance +6, Bluff +4, Climb +2, Escape Artist +9, Hide +10, Jump +2, Listen +7, Move Silently +7, Perform (comedy) +1, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +4.

Languages Common

SQ bardic knowledge +2, +1 on attack rolls against kobolds and goblinoids, +4 dodge bonus to AC against giants

Gear mwk sap, patched motley, coxcomb.

Patrissa Vrakes: A former adventurer (now grown too indolent to sally forth to dungeons) and a sorceress of some note, Patrissa Vrakes was a plant on the jury by the evil barrister, Alastir Wade (both her half-brother and lover). She didn't do it out of filial or romantic love, but rather for a high price. Patrissa had always been obsessed with fire opals, one of the rarest jewels in Avistan. She demanded her half-brother Alastir procure her a necklace of the lustrous gems in exchange for her services. Although it cost him a fortune, his neck was worth more to him, and Alastir conceded. She wears the necklace always (even to bed), and toys with it incessantly. It is her most treasured possession. Patrissa used her enchantments to convince the few good-hearted jurors to vote guilty.

Once she awakens in the courthouse, Patrissa returns to her old tricks pretty quickly in an attempt to mask her involvement, using enchantment magic against the PCs and other jurors to turn them against one another as tensions rise. She charms a likely candidate among the party (probably a fighter type) to keep her safe from the others' suspicions by defending her.

Patrissa is still very beautiful despite her overindulgences in life and wears her weight well. She favors bright red lipstick and an abundance of rouge to add to her appeal. She still has a sly smile and a sultry wink, and combined with her potent enchantments, this is usually enough to control anyone she wants. Patrissa wears a figure-hugging gown of red silk that accentuates her considerable curves. She pretends to break down if questioned and calls upon any charmed companion to come to her rescue if threatened physically. If confronted with evidence of Mord's innocence, she falls to her knees in a well-rehearsed display of anguished penitence, uttering, "That poor man. We killed that poor, poor man!" She then pretends to be ignorant of any plot and insists she made a genuine error in convicting him. She also does her best to aid the PCs in ferreting



Designer Notes

PATRISSA'S CHARMS

A saving throw gives up a good ruse right away. As soon as you say "roll a Will save" everyone at the table knows the jig is up. If Patrissa casts *charm person* on a PC, roll his save in secret and do not even bother informing him of the result. Instead, if the PC fails the save, do your best to roleplay Patrissa in a positive light, especially toward that PC. Endear her to the PC (and player) with flirtation, a display of feigned weakness to incite a protective response from her dupe, or by always seeming to come to his defense or aid. Do not heavy-hand him with the enchantment magic until the player begins to realize what an absolute snake Patrissa is, at which point you can feel free to let him know he is charmed.

out the true conspirators behind "this evil frame-up!" Patrissa refuses to admit her involvement in jury tampering until after three other jurors perish, at which point she becomes taciturn as she realizes she too will probably be killed. Even then, a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check is required to get a confession from the stubborn sorceress.

PATRISSA VRAKES

Female human sorcerer 2

CN Medium humanoid

Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 11

(+1 deflection, +1 Dex)

hp 10 (2d4+4)

Fort +2, **Ref** +1, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +1 (1d4-1)

Spells Known (CL 2nd, +2 ranged touch)

1st (5/day)—*charm person* (DC 15), *sleep* (DC 15)

0 (6/day)—*acid splash*, *daze* (DC 14), *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *ghost sound* (DC 13)



Killian

TACTICS

Before Combat Patrissa does her best to *charm* anyone she thinks might mean her harm or might prove useful protecting her.

During Combat If anyone attacks Patrissa, she employs *sleep*, throws down her *whip token* to deal with those who did not succumb, and then flees.

Morale Patrissa is not a fighter. She flees at the first chance unless she is confident her *charmed* minions can keep her safe from harm.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 14, **Int** 10, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +0

Feats Alertness (while Matilda is within arms' reach), Combat Casting, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Skills Bluff +8, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (local) +2, Move Silently +4, Spellcraft +3.

Languages Common

SQ summon familiar (cat named Matilda)

Gear feather token (*whip*), mwk dagger concealed in garter sheath, necklace of 12 fire opals, ruby ring of protection +1, sequined red

evening gown, two of pentacles from a deck of illusion (illusion of herself).

Killian Paltreth: The real Killian Paltreth, town drunk and indebted socialite, died months ago. This one is actually a rogue named Sveth, who once served as the courthouse janitor and remained Jarbin Mord's only friend when his death-hour came. After he discovered a final inscription left by Mord in the Holding Cells (see area 9), Sveth was consumed by the urge to avenge his friend. He became a skilled apothecary by day, a sinister rogue by night, and a few weeks ago he was drawn to the old courthouse, where he met with Mord for the first time since his old friend's demise. The Croaker beseeched Sveth to aid in his revenge by drugging the other jurors (and PCs) and bringing them to the courthouse to face judgment. Sveth, in order to help his undead friend uncover the particulars of everyone's wrongdoings, attends the grim reunion as well, in disguise as Killian Paltreth one of the jurors who passed away without an heir or relative to take the rap for him. If the PCs pick up lots of clues, they figure out "Killian" is not who he pretends to be, and they may learn Sveth's true identity, his connection to the Croaker, and the role the rogue played in drugging them all and bringing them to the courthouse.

Sveth's disguise is well honed. He appears a rosy-cheeked old human man dressed in threadbare finery with a broad handlebar mustache and a frayed top hat. He even manages to pull off Paltreth's paunch well enough with a padded girdle and squints through a crystal monocle taken from Killian's dead hand. Out of character, Sveth is a thin spidery man who stoops from too many years over a mortar and pestle. His gray-black eyes are dull and grim, although he affects a jocular inebriated sparkle as Killian.

SVETH, "KILLIAN PALTRETH"

CR 3

Male human expert 2/rogue 2

N Medium humanoid

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Listen** +1, **Spot** +1

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 15, flat-footed 11
(+1 armor, +5 Dex)

hp 16 (4d6)

Fort +0, **Ref** +8, **Will** +4

Defensive evasion

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 dagger +9 (1d4+1 plus poison)

Ranged mwk darts +9 (1d4 plus poison)

Special Attacks blue whinnis poison (Injury DC 14, 1 Con/Unconsciousness), sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Sveth quaffs his *potion of cat's grace* if he senses trouble and tries to get some distance between himself and his foes. If possible, he Quick Draws a weapon and sneak attacks a threat before his opponent has a chance to spring an attack.

During Combat Sveth wants to leave the killing to Mord's ghost as much as possible. He fights to disable, hurling poisoned quill-darts and then fleeing. If cornered, he draws his concealed dagger.

Morale Sveth flees if reduced to less than half his hit points.

Base Statistics **Init** +3, **AC** 14; **Ref** +6, **Dex** 16, all attacks -2, **Hide** +10, **Move Silently** +10, **Sleight of Hand** +12

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 20, **Con** 11, **Int** 13, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Feats Deceitful, Quick Draw, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +9, Climb +3, Craft (alchemy) +6, Disguise +13, Forgery +8, Gather Information +9, Hide +12, Knowledge (local) +6, Move Silently +12, Sense Motive +7, Sleight of Hand +14.

Languages Common, Elven

SQ trapfinding

Combat Gear *potion of cat's grace* Other Gear

+1 dagger (concealed in belt buckle), padded costume (and armor), silver (lead-weighted) cane, 4 throwing darts fashioned into quill-pens (coated with blue whinnis), two identical flasks (one filled with brandy, the other with his *potion of cat's grace*).

Malgrim Hurkes: Alastir Wade knew it would take more than the wily Patrissa to convince the more stubborn jurors to go along with his accusation. For some, like the stubborn Halgrak, more forceful measures would be necessary. At the time, Wade had an understanding with a certain criminal organization that operated within Absalom. When he asked them for some muscle to help him strong-arm some jurors into an appropriate verdict, though, he got more than he bargained for when his associates sent him Malgrim. Under normal circumstances, Alastir could never get a hobgoblin

on the jury, but in the wake of the earthquake, there was no authority in place to object when the “lumberjack” Malgrim showed up at the trial. It took all of Patrissa’s wiles to convince Sir Rekkart not to kill Malgrim on sight, but by then the vixen had the foppish paladin wrapped tightly around her little finger.

Once on the jury, Malgrim proved more effective than even Wade had hoped. In the ten years since the trial, the hobgoblin has risen far, and is now one of the most powerful (and most wanted) criminals in the city. A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check reveals Hurkes’s infamous reputation as a bloodthirsty killer who runs a gang called the Grindle Street Shades. He is a fearsome cutthroat with a reputation for garroting—with his spiked chain—any who cross him. He dissuades any probing into the murder case by the party, but he is soon swept aside by Mord, who “persuades” the hobgoblin to throttle himself with his own chain. Malgrim is the first victim of the Croaker (see Event 1), but before his death he no doubt causes the party a great deal of trouble.

MALGRIM HURKES

CR 6

Male hobgoblin rogue 3/fighter 2

LE Medium humanoid (goblinoid)

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13

(+3 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 34 (5HD; 3d6+2d10+10)

Fort +8, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk spiked chain +10 (2d4+4) or unarmed +8 (1d3+4)

TACTICS

Before Combat If Malgrim perceives a real threat he slinks into the shadows and readies his spiked chain. He doesn’t view most people as a real threat, though, and usually laughs at those who challenge him, calmly lighting a cigar and blowing smoke in their faces.

During Combat Malgrim doesn’t bother with his spiked chain unless seriously threatened (reduced to 20 hp or less). He prefers to leave his enemies breathing to report his fearsome skills in combat (this is one of the secrets to Malgrim’s rise to criminal power and his infamous reputation).

Morale Malgrim hasn’t survived the underworld

Malgrim



for a long time by being a fool. He flees if reduced to fewer than 10 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12

Base Atk +4; Grp +8

Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Stealthy

Skills Bluff +7, Climb +5 (+7 ropes), Gather Information +7, Hide +10, Intimidate +11, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +14, Sense Motive +8, Spot +4.

Languages Common, Goblin

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1

Combat Gear potion of cure moderate wounds;

Other Gear gold cigar case filled with ten cigars and tools, Grindle-Slash (monogrammed mwk spiked chain), mwk studded leather, silver tindertwig case, small necklace pouch filled with gold and silver teeth taken from his enemies (one of them is from Ebin’s set of silver teeth).

Sir Rekkart Cole: This upright paladin in the service of Iomedae was Alastir’s linchpin juror, a plant meant to dispel misgivings and suspicions concerning the case’s dubious evidence and mishandled process. Cole is as pure-hearted and law-abiding as they come, quick-witted but gullible and weak-willed. His naive mind was like putty in Patrissa’s seductive hands. Rekkart oscillates between stalwart ally and hindering foil to the PCs’ activities on the adventure. His memory of the trial is blurry in points and crystal clear in others. He is quite certain the jury’s guilty verdict was honest and equitable and is insulted by any insinuation otherwise.

Rekkart is a tall, sturdy human man in his fiftieth winter, with the snow of age gracing his hair. His face is chiseled as if out of marble, and his narrowed eyes stare down an impressive nose with a superior air. He is very useful in the sense that he happily tells the PCs that he and the others were all members of the jury for Mord’s trial. If he can be convinced of Mord’s innocence he immediately forsakes his paladinhood out of guilt but pledges to aid the PCs in their quest to uncover the true guilty parties in the Mord family slayings and Jarbin’s trial. If the guilty party is not discovered, Rekkart offers his own neck to the noose to ease Mord’s suffering (see *Concluding the Adventure*).

SIR REKKART COLE

CR 3

Male human aristocrat 2/paladin 2

LG Medium humanoid

Init –1; **Senses** Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15

(+6 armor, –1 Dex)

hp 31 (4HD; 2d8+2d10+7)

Fort +6, **Ref** +1, **Will** +4

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee +1 longsword +5 (1d8+2)

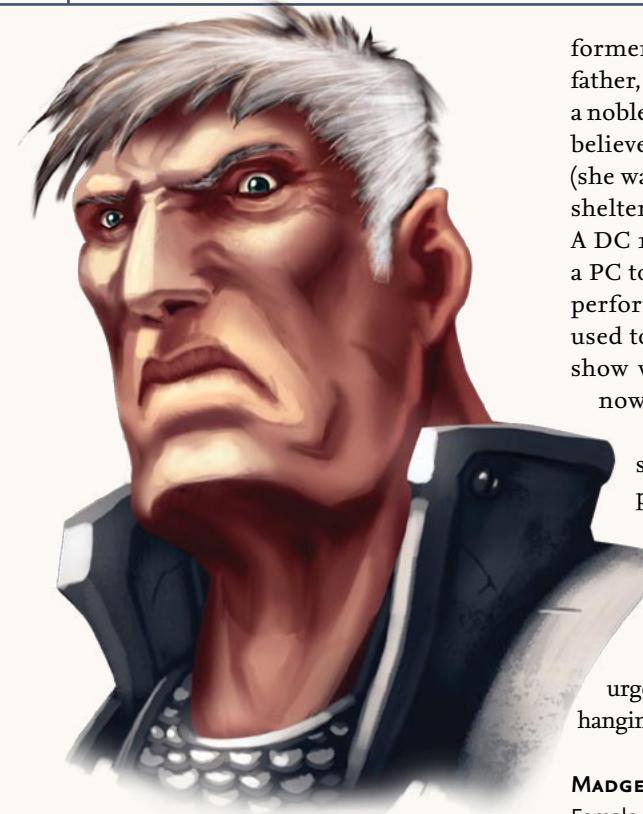
Special Attack smite evil 1/day (+2 attack, +2 damage)

Spell-Like (CL 2nd)
at will—detect evil

TACTICS

Before Combat Rekkart offers a prayer to Iomedae.

During Combat Rekkart smites the most powerful evil foe he can detect. He does not use lay on hands on himself unless no other good person



Sir Rekkart

(or someone he cares about) is wounded.

Morale Cole fights stalwartly until disabled or slain.

STATISTICS

Str 13, **Dex** 8, **Con** 12, **Int** 12, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Feats Mounted Combat, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Skills Diplomacy +11, Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +3, Ride +4, Spot +3.

Languages Common, Celestial

SQ detect evil, divine grace, lay on hands (4 hp)

Gear +1 chainmail, +1 longsword, silver snuff box (30 gp), ten pinches of Tullen snuff (10 gp).

Madge Blossomheart: A pretty young halfling, ten years ago Madge was selected for her naiveté and her dislike of Mord, who executed her father years before the trial. She is still as stunningly beautiful at 30 as she was at 20 and immediately latches on to the most handsome and manly PC, seeking protection. Madge is a thin halfling with an athletic build who keeps in shape as an acrobat performer in the many open markets of Absalom—

formerly something she did with her father, before he was executed for knifing a nobleman in the back. Madge could not believe her father would do such a thing (she was young and sweet and her father sheltered her from his illicit activities). A DC 15 Knowledge (local) check allows a PC to know Madge as a popular street performer. A DC 25 result reveals she used to be one half of a father-daughter show with her father Daben, although now she performs solo.

Madge has pouty lips auburn hair she wears in a topknot, her sculpted physique draws men's desire even as her crystal blue eyes and air of innocence makes them want to protect her. Madge is reticent about her motivation for convicting Mord, but a DC 20 Diplomacy check urges her to spill the tale of her father's hanging at the executioner's hands.

MADGE BLOSSOMHEART

CR 2

Female halfling rogue 2

CN Small humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Listen +3, Spot +3

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 12

(+1 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 9 (2d6)

Fort +1, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2 (+4 vs. fear)

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +2 (1d4–1)

Ranged mwk dagger +6 (1d4–1)

Special Attack sneak attack +1d6

TACTICS

Before Combat Madge tumbles and jumps to advantageous terrain.

During Combat Madge flanks a foe if able, in order to sneak attack.

Morale Madge flees if wounded at all.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 14, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +1; **Grp** –3

Feats Skill Focus (Tumble)

Skills Balance +9, Bluff +7, Climb +3, Escape Artist +8, Hide +12, Jump +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +10, Open Lock +7, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +3, Tumble +14.

Languages Common, Elven, Halfling

SQ trapfinding

Gear 4 mwk daggers, mwk padded armor, mwk thieves' tools, small backpack, 50 ft. of silk rope.

Tablark Hammergrind: A grizzled old dwarf laborer who has held more than a hundred odd jobs in cities all over Golarion, Tablark is pretty sure he's seen all the world has to show in his 452 winters. Tablark is wrong. He displays stout courage at the outset and does his best to take control of the situation. His steely resolve should serve to bolster the PCs at first: "You don't fear lads, Old Tablark's seen more ghosts than these walls 'ave rats. Nothing to quake about. We'll send this foul spirit a'packin' or me clan name ain't Hammergrind!" When actually faced with the Croaker, though, the old dwarf falls apart. He is the second of the jurors to meet his maker.

Tablark was also under Patrissa's charmed influence during his time on the jury and believes wholeheartedly that Jarbin Mord was "Nuthin'" but a filthy child-murderer and wife-killer. Hangin' was too good for 'im, ya ask me. Shoulda let me give 'im a taste o' dwarven justice, with the same axe he did for his loved ones with, ya hear!"

TABLARK HAMMERGRIND

CR 2

Male dwarf expert 3

N Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12

(+2 armor)

hp 18 (3d6+9)

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +3 (+5 vs. magic)

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee unarmed +3 (1d3+2)

TACTICS

Before Combat Tablark does his best to Intimidate foes.

During Combat Hammergrind slugs away with his heavy fists but only deals nonlethal damage unless badly wounded. If he is fighting a single opponent he grapples his foe into submission.

Morale Hammergrind fears no mortal foe and fights until unconscious or dead. He flees any ghostly creature at first sight (see Event 2).

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike

Skills Climb +5, Craft (carpentry) +3, Disable Device +3, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +5, Knowledge (architecture and

engineering) +3, Knowledge (religion) +3, Search +3, Survival +4, Use Rope +4.
Languages Common, Dwarven
Gear leather jerkin and pants (counts as leather armor), mwk carpenter's tools.

Welcome to the Party

The beginning of this adventure is specifically designed to force the PCs (who have likely never seen each other before) to interact. The fact that all of the other jurors know each other, at least slightly, immediately makes the PCs outsiders, which should encourage them to work together. Since most of the NPCs hide something sinister about what happened here last time, the stage is set for an entertaining session filled with clandestine investigation, paranoid accusations, and outright manipulation.

All of the kidnapped NPC jurors have their gear, as the sneaky alchemist knows it will not avail them against the Croaker and might actually prove useful in ferreting out the true killer. Sveth managed to drug and kidnap each of them while they were alone, and he was clever enough that there does not appear to be any consistent elements in any of the NPCs' stories. It's up to you to work out how each of the PCs was captured, but it shouldn't be too hard for you to come up with a scenario where the alchemist can slip a little poison into some food or medicine. In any case, once the Croaker appears and begins to exact his horrible vengeance (see Part 2), the purpose of gathering all of the former jurors together becomes clear.

Exploring the Courthouse

Mord's troubled spirit is only one of the courthouses' resident souls. The spirits of many he sent to the gallows linger as well, along with his wife's shadow in the attic and the twisted spirit of his son, Gabe. Mord's son is not a typical undead but rather exists now as a haunting presence in the courthouse in which he used to play as a living child. Gabe still plays now, but his games are often deadly. The boy is capricious and dangerous but also offers an occasional hint through his warped sense of fun. The spirit of Gabe manifests in haunts, which are listed in several areas below.

Haunts function somewhat like traps, but they are difficult to detect since they do not "exist" until they are triggered. When

a haunt is triggered, its effects manifest at initiative rank 10 on a surprise round; the haunt effect vanishes as soon as the surprise round is over and things return to normal (haunts never persist into actual round-by-round "combat"). Any characters haunted by the effect (all creatures for universal haunts, which are the only kind employed in *Hangman's Noose*) can make a specific skill check to notice the haunt in time to react—if a character notices it, he may make an initiative check to determine when he acts in the round. Once a haunt is active, a successful turn undead attempt against the haunt's effective Hit Dice ends it immediately, although the character making the turn attempt must notice the haunt and must act before it in the surprise round it is activated. If the turning attempt results in a destruction result, that particular haunt is exorcised and permanently disabled. Once a haunt is triggered, it does not trigger again for 24 hours.

Besides the effects listed below, the PCs occasionally hear the little boy giggling in the darkest corners of the courthouse or hear his footfalls running on the upper floors, but if they rush to investigate no one is there.

1. Great Hall (EL 1)

Eight enormous marble pillars fill this great hall, holding aloft grand balconies. Years of dust cover the floor, and muslin coverings are draped over the railings of baroque staircases curling like lazy serpents up to the raised landings above. A rusted chandelier above sheds the dim light of a few guttering candles. An impressive grandfather clock more than ten feet tall rests against the center of the western wall, its face decorated with guilty souls suffering Asmodeus' torments: evisceration, force-feasting of coals, scalding blades tearing them apart, and other less savory punishments. The clock stands between a set of impressive oak doors and a lone oak door of equitable splendor, identical to another set across the hall. The largest set of doors is at the south end of this long hall. They are barred against the night.

This long hall is the main promenade of the courthouse. Four sets of thick oaken doors lead to the two courtrooms and two judges' chambers of the building. Another heavy iron door, locked and barred, leads to the gallows



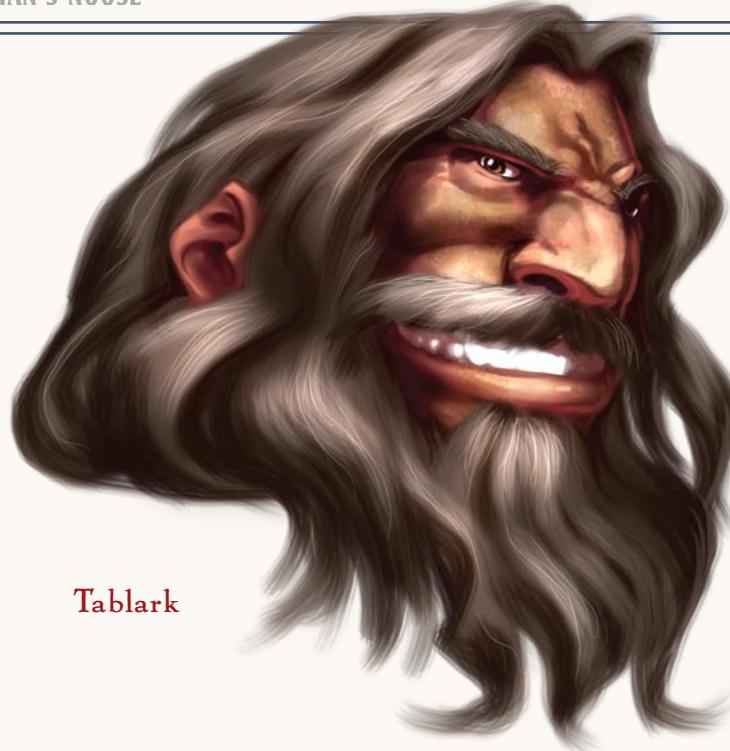
Madge

and basement level. A small privy is located in the northeast corner of the hall. The large set of wooden doors on the south end of the promenade leads out of the courthouse to windswept Beldrin's Bluff. These doors are barred, and the haunting spirits of Jarbin, his wife, and his son don't allow anyone to leave the courthouse until sunrise. If the entryway doors are forced open, they lead right back into the great hall. Likewise, if anyone destroys a wall or smashes open a boarded window to escape to the outside in any other area, the person attempting escape suddenly finds himself in the great hall (or another room of your choice if that would prove more dramatic). There is no escape until sunrise, or until the mystery of Mord's wrongful death and the murder of his family is solved and the true offender punished.

Heavy Oak Entryway Doors: hardness 10, hp 80, break DC 25.

Iron-shod Secure Door: hardness 15, hp 120, break DC 30, Open Lock 25. The key to this door is located in area **18**.

Haunts: The first time the PCs enter this area, the grandfather clock goes berserk,



Tablark

tolling and clanging dissonantly, assaulting the sanity of listeners. Anyone hearing the clock is violated by images of strangulation, death, murder by axe, and other gruesome flashes, which deal 1d4 points of Wisdom damage unless the victim succeeds on a DC 15 Will save.

The second time someone moves through this area, the crystal chandelier comes crashing down on anyone below it, dealing 1d6 points of bludgeoning and slashing damage (DC 15 Reflex save negates).

CACOPHONOUS CLOCK

Type universal

Notice Spot DC 20; Effective HD 2

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; Reset automatic (24 hours)

Effect 1d4 Wisdom damage; Will DC 15 negates

FALLING CHANDELIER

Type universal

Notice Spot DC 20; Effective HD 2

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; Reset automatic (24 hours)

Effect 1d6 bludgeoning and slashing damage to anyone below the chandelier; Reflex DC 15 negates

Clues: The dust on the floor of this chamber has been disturbed from the

entrance to Courtroom A (area 2). Anyone with the Track feat may make a DC 15 Survival check to learn that one person dragged several unconscious bodies into Courtroom A only a few hours earlier. A DC 20 check reveals that 11 bodies were dragged in (an important clue that indicates one among the 12 jurors was responsible for bringing the others here). A DC 25 check reveals that tracks of the person dragging the others were sized for human male or bigger, which precludes Patrissa, Madge, and Ebin as possible suspects for the kidnapper.

2. Courtroom A (EL 2)

Rows of dusty benches, several askew or knocked over, are lined behind a waist-high partition separating spectators from trials. A dusty wooden jurors' box, rickety from generations of termites and time's cruel fangs, stands against the south wall. A high bench covered in muslin rests against the east wall. Two thick tables once stood facing the bench, now one has been smashed to kindling. An evidence table rests against the south wall.

This is where the trial of Jarbin Mord took place and where the PCs awaken.

Haunt: A piece of the mural on the ceiling above (the portion with Iomedae's shining

sword upon it) breaks free from the ceiling with a groaning crack. The chunk of marble falls onto the evidence table and sends the bloody axe on it spinning end over end across the courtroom, sinking solidly into the wall of the jurors' box. The person who approaches the evidence table (and thus activates the haunt) takes 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage from the falling chunk of marble. Anyone between the evidence table and the jurors' box is clipped by the axe as it flies through the air. It's a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid the falling piece of marble.

FALLING MURAL AND FLYING AXE CR 2

Type universal

Notice Spot DC 20; Effective HD 2

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; Reset automatic (24 hours)

Effect Two effects (falling marble and axe):

Falling Marble 1d6 bludgeoning damage DC 15 Reflex save for half; Flying Axe Atk +8 (1d6 slashing damage)

3. Courtroom B (EL 3)

Much of the furniture in this old courtroom has been splintered into kindling. It looks like someone has ruthlessly smashed almost everything in the room. Beyond the carnage, the bench has been overturned and the jurors' box is in shambles. The windows here are crisscrossed with heavy boards. Where the nails breach the plaster around the windows, rust stains seep like bloody wounds in the courthouse walls.

Creatures: One of the results of the rampant corruption caused by the presence of the Croaker are carriionstorms, flocks of undead ravens created when living birds feast on the flesh of the undead. These creatures are drawn to areas haunted by restless spirits and feed both on undead denizens and the flesh of the living.

CARRIONSTORMS (2)

CR 1

NE Tiny undead (swarm)

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Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +2, Spot +7

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 12

(+2 size)

hp 13 (2d12)

Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5

Defensive half damage from piercing and slashing; Immune swarm traits, undead traits

OFFENSE
Spd 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (good)
Melee swarm 1d6

Space 10 ft.; Reach 0 ft.
Special Attacks distraction (DC 11)

TACTICS

Before Combat The carionstorms hide until their prey draws near so as to surprise it.

Morale Carionstorms fight to the death.

STATISTICS

Str 1, Dex 11, Con —, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 6

Base Atk +1; Grp -12

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Spot +7

SQ pallid bond, vulnerable to turning

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Distraction (Ex) Any living creature that begins its turn with a carionstorm in its space must make a DC 11 Fortitude save or be nauseated for 1 round. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Pallid Bond (Ex) A carionstorm never initiates an attack on a creature that openly wears an unholy symbol of Urgathoa or is itself undead. If attacked first by such a creature, the carionstorm's attack only deals 1d3 points of damage rather than the normal 1d6.

Vulnerable to Turning (Ex) A successful turn undead check against a carionstorm does not turn the storm—rather, it destroys many of the individual birds, dealing damage equal to the result of the turning damage roll. A turn undead attempt that would normally result in the target's destruction destroys the entire swarm.

4. Judge Silman Trabe's Chambers (EL 1/2)

These simple quarters haven't been used in years. A plain oak desk stands near the back. Several voluminous texts on Absalom law, all gilt-edged and bound in leather, lay scattered about in the room.

These chambers were kept by Silman Trabe during his posting here.

Haunt: When the PCs enter the room, Gabe's spirit hurls books off the shelves, cackling maliciously. One book in particular, entitled "Punish the Guilty," falls open on Trabe's desk to a passage that reads: "We, entrusted with justice, must be above reproach. Those who fail to serve justice blindly shall reap what they sow."

FLYING Books

Type universal
Notice Spot DC 20; Effective HD 1

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; Reset automatic (24 hours)

Effect One book flies at everyone present, Atk +5 (1d4 nonlethal damage)

Treasure: Among the books here is an old papyrus scroll containing the following spells: *light*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, and *shield*.

5. Judge Felgor's Chambers (EL 1)

This lavish room of cold marble is festooned with a large but mangy polar bear-skin rug and an ornate desk of darkwood carved with an odd motif of cherubs grappling with vipers. Behind the desk in a high-backed leather chair rests a skeleton in judge's regalia, a long white beard still draped down the front of his robes. A rusted iron spiked chain still dangles from around the neck of the skeleton. Near the desk lays the desiccated skeleton of a large dog, a few of its ribs broken and its skull cracked.

These were the chambers of His Honor, Rayndros Felgor. An obese man with an appetite for rich food, finery, and whores that far exceeded his sense of justice on most occasions, Rayndros agreed to stand silent and complicit in Mord's trial. After watching the innocent man walk silently to his own gallows, however, Rayndros was eaten away from within by remorse and announced to Silman Trabe he was going to expose the whole stinking lie. Trabe and Alastir paid Malgrim Hurkes to silence the judge. The burly hobgoblin kicked Judge Felgor's faithful dog to death when it tried to defend him, and then garroted the fat man with a spiked chain. The courthouse was being nailed shut in the bedlam of the flight from Beldrin's Bluff, so Malgrim didn't even bother to dispose of the fat man's body—the assassin left the judge in his high-backed chair to rot with the old spiked chain still dangling from his neck.

Creature: Rayndros's wolf-hound, named Karso, does not rest easy. Unable to save his master, the dog's soul remains. Karso's skeleton animates to attack anyone approaching Rayndros's skeleton, defending his master even from beyond the grave.



Designer Notes

PROPS MAKE THE NPC

In theatre, actors love a good prop—it gives them something to play with and can even help define their characters for an audience. NPCs are the same. Providing your important NPCs with something cool to play with gives the PCs something to identify them by and gives you something to "do" as you portray them. In this adventure, Malgrim Hurkes smokes the finest cigars in Golarion—Julian cigars harvested from the once-rich tobacco fields of the Sodden Lands long before they were washed away by the Eye of Abendego. They are extremely rare and no longer made. Today, only a few caches still exist and they are nigh-impossible to procure. Hurkes smokes them because he enjoys them, but also because it shows off his power. Most members of Absalom's aristocratic elite cannot find or afford them. Hurkes enjoys lighting up and taking a long drag on his cigar before he answers a question, levels a threat, or otherwise taunts a PC. Ham it up and mime the cigars; make Malgrim a memorable character right away as a total badass, sort of a hobgoblin Tony-Soprano-meets-Riddick. That way, when he eats it first, it puts the fear of Mord into the PCs. Give other NPCs props too. Patrissa constantly plays with her fire opal necklace, Killian sips his flask, and Ebin twirls his sap when he's nervous (pretty much all the time). The physicality of miming these props even helps the players know when you "switch" roles. Props can really help distinguish one NPC from the next in an adventure as NPC heavy as *Hangman's Noose*. If the number of NPCs seems overwhelming at first, never fear—they get killed off real quick!

KARSO, SKELETAL WOLF HOUND

CR 1
hp 13; MM 226

TACTICS

During Combat Karso attacks Malgrim Hurkes if he still lives and is with the PCs. If he is not, the skeleton attacks the largest target. **Morale** Karso fights to the bitter end (again) to defend his master.

Treasure: Rayn dros kept a potion of lesser restoration and a potion of bear's endurance in two flasks in his desk to fight off mean hangovers and bolster himself for long court sessions. He also kept a potion of cure moderate wounds in a dusty glass flask here as well. The old judge's gilded masterwork dagger rests in an ornate emerald-and-silver sheath in his desk (the sheath is worth 100 gp).

Clue: Malgrim Hurkes left his spiked chain around Rayndros' neck in his haste to leave the courthouse (Mord's rasping in the dark scared him off). Anyone who makes a DC 15 Knowledge (local) check recalls Malgrim's penchant for the weapon and anyone making a DC 15 Spot check notices the spiked chain belt Malgrim wears presently is remarkably similar to the rusted one around the Judge's neck. Rayndros had also begun drafting a letter to Absalom's higher court concerning Mord's trial, but he didn't get far before Malgrim Hurkes arrived. His final written testament contains only what is seen on Handout 1.

6. Jury Deliberation Chamber

This room contains one long oval-shaped wooden table and twelve rickety, worn chairs. Razor-thin shafts of moonlight peek through one large window covered with rotting boards.

This is where the jury retired to deliberate cases. The room is empty now.

Clue: Ebin Blithoggle, never very wise, carved his initials on the underside of the table where he sat for hours on end listening to the others jibber-jabber. When the guilty verdict proved imminent (thanks to Patrissa's and Malgrim's persuasions), Ebin delightedly carved "Who's funny now Mord?" next to his initials "E.B."

7. The Gallows (EL 5)

Gloom reigns here, and the room scorns light. An unnatural cold pervades this place, cutting right through cloth and flesh. A raised gallows with a noose hanging from its crossbeam stands sentinel in this room where hundreds of souls died either with a quick snap of the neck or jerking freakishly. The air in this dark chamber is absolutely still and unusually cold. The silence suddenly breaks when a single creak echoes from

Most Honorable High Magistrate
Archamais Mazer,

It is with great remorse that I script this. The chaos of our time has eaten many innocent souls, but this one was lost not to catastrophe, but to an evil deed of injustice. Lies have killed a man this morning and I for my part did nothing to stop it. My esteemed colleague Silman Trabe knowingly sent an innocent man to the gallows, as I stood by silently. I only hope that Jarbin Mord's soul may find some rest if the truth comes out



Handout 1

the rickety stairs of the gallows. Another follows, and dust shakes from the steps as a figure comes into view. His hands are bound before him and he lurches with a palsied gait as he comes. His head is shrouded in a black bag, hanging impossibly at a right angle off his mangled neck. A sound like an old door hinge or leather dragged over wood curdles from his shredded throat and he reaches for you with arched fingers curled into white claws.

Creature: The Croaker haunts the gallows where he hung. He moves freely through the courthouse and has probably already killed more than one of the jurors by the time the party reaches here, but this is the first time the PCs lay eyes on the tortured ghost of Jarbin Mord.

JARBIN MORD, THE CROAKER CR 5
hp 58; see Appendix

Tactics
During Combat The Croaker employs his maddening touch on the party for 3 rounds and then animates the hangman's noose on the gallows to strangle one of them.

Morale Mord disengages with the party after

the third round, either chasing his next appointed victim (see Part 2 below) or simply vanishing through the floor.

Development: Any jurors currently with the party flee in terror at the sight of Mord's ghost. If Tablark Hammergrind has not met his fate yet when the party arrives here (see Event 2), and he is with the party, he screams in abject horror over and over again like a wounded animal. The crusty old dwarf then falls to his knees wailing and claws at his eyes in an attempt to drive the dreadful sight before him away. He then flees the room blindly, blood running freely down his face, stumbling and smashing headlong through the corridor to area 1.

Vision: As soon as the PCs enter this chamber, the party member who experienced Vision 2 experiences it again, with even more detail, as he beholds the gallows just before Mord makes his appearance. Read or paraphrase the following to him alone.

Again you find yourself swinging on the end of a rope as a crowd of onlookers cheers and jeers. Their heartless laughter washes over you and



leaves you drowning in a sea of hate, as you desperately try to draw breath with lungs that no longer work. As darkness washes over you, you notice one man in particular smiling at you with a satisfied expression. He is a handsome young man with blond locks and piercing blue eyes, and he fingers a long thin scar, freshly healed, on his lower left cheek.

8. Torture Chamber (EL 4)

Brutal machines to coax confessions from the accused fill this mournful room of cold stone, pain, and dark stains. A flaying rack rests in one corner, with an iron maiden against one wall; a restraining chair adorned with all manner of crushing vices and punishing screws sits like a throne at the chamber's center. A rack on the wall bears rusted implements of persuasion: pulling tongs; pliers; eight-inch spikes; and an array of rusty needles, syringes, and scalpels.

Usually, a victim couldn't be sentenced to death until he confessed, even if found guilty. To expedite "justice," magistrates often employed torture to wring out a

confession from a prisoner. Mord did not succumb under the ministrations of men or machines in this chamber, as the formality of a confession was overlooked in his case.

Creature: The horror that was once Father Kelgaard rests within the iron maiden here. Sadly, his band of adventurers did not succeed in unraveling the mystery of Mord's family's murder before they succumbed to his maddening touch and met horrible ends. Now Kelgaard's tormented spirit awaits others to share in his pain. Kelgaard attacks as soon as someone draws near the maiden or enters deeper into the chamber to investigate.

When he emerges, the hinges on the iron maiden creak horribly, sloughing rust as the cover opens. His dried corpse, with dozens of horrid puncture wounds from the maiden's embrace riddling his face and body, is wrapped in rotting robes embroidered with a faded symbol of Sarenrae over his chainmail. Ragged blond hairs still cling to his emaciated skull as he lurches forward and opens his jaws.

FATHER KELGAARD, GHASTLY PRIEST CR 3
hp 29; MM 119 (ghast)
 Father Kelgaard wears chainmail (AC 22)

TACTICS

During Combat Father Kelgaard is content to paralyze one foe at a time and move on to the next, hoping to disable the entire party and then take his time savoring the flesh.

Morale Father Kelgaard fights until destroyed.

Haunt: If someone moves toward the center of the room, Gabe's spirit pushes him into the restraining chair. Leather harnesses and vices instantly animate under the boy's influence and strap down the victim, crushing him for 1 round while Gabe whispers, "Daddy make you confess your crimes down here!" After the surprise round of the haunt's activation ends, the crushing vices and screws stop twisting in, but the person remains restrained.

CONFESSORIAL CHAIR CR 2

Type universal

Notice Spot DC 20; **Effective HD** 2

EFFECTS

Trigger proximity; **Reset** automatic (24 hours)
Effect Bull Rush (+5 modifier) pushes the victim into the chair. If he fails the opposed check he is automatically strapped in and takes 1d6

points of damage from the chair's twisting screws and crushing vices. The restraining straps on the chair can be broken (hp 10, hardness 3, Break DC 20) or slipped (Escape Artist DC 20) as a full-round action, or another person can take a full-round action to undo them.

Treasure: On a rack on the wall sit three masterwork short spears (used to torment victims) and a +1 heavy flail that once belonged to the head interrogator, a loathsome cretin named Ulako.

9. Holding Cells (EL 2)

Several rusted iron cages take up most of the area. The barred doors are open and a few swing eerily, although no wind blows down here in the dark. In the lane stretching between these cages lies a headless skeleton, one arm folded beneath it awkwardly, the other outstretched from its side.

The skeleton was once Sashrala, a beautiful sorceress and member of Kelgaard's party who dared encroach upon Mord's domain five years ago. Her lover, Grisdom Twin-Axe, struck her down and tore her head off after he was driven insane by the Croaker.

Creature: After his corpse goes mysteriously missing (see Event 3), Halgrak turns up down here in the dark. He has risen again as a disgusting gangrenous ghoul whose flesh crawls with putrid bacteria writhing on its skin. Halgrak is hidden under the bunk in one of the cells whose door no longer locks.

HALGRAK, GANGRENOUS GHOUL CR 2
hp 18; MM 119 (ghoul)

Gangrenous (Su) Halgrak is a variant ghoul whose claws and bite infect a foe with necrotizing bacteria instead of ghoul fever. Anyone bitten takes 1d4 points of Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution damage unless the victim makes a DC 14 Fortitude save, taking an additional point of damage to each stat every hour on the hour (another save is allowed each hour to avoid that hour's degradation). If any stat is reduced to 0, the victim succumbs to the bacteria and immediately rises as a ghoul of the same variant type as Halgrak. Treat the effect as a disease.

I have served as an angel of justice my entire life. I shall have mine. Even if it be in death, justice shall be mine. Gveth, my only friend, you will find this when you clean the cell. You are my avenging angel now. Bring those liars and fools back to me after I swing, so that I might have my justice. Ten years to the day, then they will pay, my soul shall stay until ten years to the day. When the true murderer of my beloved Malene and my boy Gabe swings from my gallows as I did, on the tenth anniversary of my hanging, then at long last I shall be free.

J.M.

Handout 2

the dark behind the maze of filing cabinets and piled strongboxes and sends ripples dancing across the still water.

TACTICS

During Combat Halgrak tries to infect as many PCs as possible, spreading his horrid plague.

Morale Halgrak fights until destroyed.

Clue: Carved into the underside of one of the wooden bunks in Mord's old cell (whichever one you want) is an epitaph written by Mord in his last days (see Handout 2).

Vision: As soon as the PC who had Vision 3 sees the headless skeleton, he experiences the vision again, with even more detail. Read or paraphrase the following to her alone.

Once more the image of Sashrala's freshly severed head invades your senses. As the burly man slowly turns around and moves out of the cell, you notice a shadow on the wall that you missed before. A mysterious cloaked figure watches the proceedings impassively. As you whirl to face it, a cold hand grasps your throat. You can feel its fingers crushing your windpipe as you struggle to breathe. White spots seem to dance before your eyes, and then everything goes black.

10. Record Room (EL 1)

This mold-ridden chamber is submerged in fetid water—part seawater, part stale sewage. This foul backwash of the old sewers turned piles of records and cabinets filled with sheaves of paper to rot and mold. Something scuttles in

AQUATIC CENTIPEDES (2)

CR 1/2

hp 4 each; MM 286 (Medium monstrous centipede)

Aquatic (Ex) These centipedes can breathe underwater as well as on land, and have a 30-foot Swim speed.

TACTICS

During Combat The centipedes flank a single target and attempt to down it, then drag the corpse under water to feast on it.

Morale These mindless vermin fight until either they have downed one foe or they are slain.

Clues: Anyone who searches the records here notes a complete lack of any documentation of Mord's trial. Anyone who succeeds on a DC 15 Search check turns up records of many others sent to the gallows on Mord's grim watch as executioner. The first record



is of one Daben Blossomheart (Madge Blossomheart's father), sentenced to death for robbing and stabbing a visiting diplomat. It is documented that Daben was survived by his daughter Madge (who was 15 years old at the time).

11. Morgue (EL 2)

This room is cold and obscured with frosty mist. Two of its walls are covered in rows of small steel doors, obviously sized for slabs on which dead bodies lay. A thin sheen of ice glitters on the steel, and strange whispers seem to echo from within.

Creatures: Mord toiled hard for years after his death in Beldrin's Bluff graveyard not far from the courthouse. The old executioner dug up the restless souls of the dozens of men and women he hung during his stint as executioner. Now these cruel spirits have risen as zombies, serving their executioner beyond death. All manner of brutish madmen and murderers round out the zombie inhabitants of the cooling slabs here,

and among them is Madge Blossomheart's father. The middle-aged halfling, shredded by worm-maw and rot, clammers out of his compartment along with the rest of his compatriots and shambles toward his daughter if she has not already encountered him by the time the PCs reach here (see event 5 below). The rest of the zombies reach out to strangle the PCs with cold grasping hands.

DABEN, ZOMBIE HALFLING CR 1/2

hp 16; MM 266 (kobold zombie)

Daben has no spear or light crossbow and can use only a slam attack.

TACTICS

During Combat Daben approaches Madge and coup de graces her, then battles the closest PC.

Morale Daben fights until destroyed.

BROKE-NECK ZOMBIES (3) CR 1/2

hp 16 each; MM 266 (human commoner zombies)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombies charge the PCs, stopping them from reaching Daben until he murders his daughter.

Morale The zombies fight until destroyed.

12. Barrister's Offices (EL 2)

This large area is partitioned into smaller cubicles by thin wooden walls with cracked panes of frosted glass set in them. Old desks litter the area, some overturned and emptied of their contents, others still standing where barristers once toiled under mountains of paperwork. A large window set in the north wall is shattered. Beyond, the sprawling desolation of Beldrin's Bluff greets the eye, its tangled weeds and leaning storefronts strewn with bones and rubble. Suddenly, shadows flit across the frosted glass panes of the partitions as hollow voices whisper blasphemies on the wind.

Creatures: The shadows are cast by the swaying branches of a sickly tree growing in the yard outside the courthouse (a DC 15 Spot check allows a PC to realize this). The whispering voices are nothing more than the wind hissing through the cracks in the frosted panes of glass here (a DC 20 Listen check discerns this). A giant leech clings to the ceiling here, however, usually feeding on waterfowl that flit in



Gabe

the broken window overlooking the bluff. The leech drops onto the PCs as soon as they detect it.

GIANT LEECH

N Medium vermin

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Init +1; Senses blindsight 30 ft., scent; Listen +0, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10

(+1 Dex)

hp 11 (2d8+2)

Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0

Immune vermin traits; **Weakness** salt vulnerability

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft.

Melee bite +1 (1d6 plus attach)**Special Attacks** attach, blood drain**TACTICS**

Before Combat The leech hides in the shadows on the ceiling.

During Combat The leech drop onto the PCs and attempt to bleed them dry.

Morale The leech fight to the death or until it deals 4 points of Constitution damage, after which it flees to digest its meal.

STATISTICS**Str 11, Dex 12, Con 12, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2****Base Atk +1; Grp +1****Skills** Hide +6, Spot +5**SPECIAL ABILITIES**

Attach (Ex) A giant leech that hits with its bite attack latches onto the opponent's body. An attached giant leech loses its Dex bonus to AC and thus has an AC of 10.

Blood Drain (Ex) A giant leech deals 1d4 points of Constitution damage each round it remains attached. Once it deals 4 points it detaches to digest its meal.

Salt Vulnerability (Ex) A giant leech takes 1d6 points of damage per round that salt is poured on its body.

Clues: Alastir Wade's old desk still holds a couple of clues pointing to his murder of Mord's family and the masterminding of Jarbin Mord's mistrial. Several red scarves of Varisian silk matching those in area **18** are stuffed into one of the drawers of Alastir's desk (they belonged to Malene). Also, Alastir's hobby of moneylending is how he got Halgrak Five-Toes to do his bidding, and several debtor's vouchers with Halgrak's crude signature on them are in another drawer, along with a buyer's receipt for a string of 12 fire opals. Anyone who specifically states he searches the desks automatically finds these clues, otherwise a DC 15 Search check reveals them. After finding the buyer's receipt, a DC 10 Spot check reveals that the described necklace matches the one that Patrissa wears.

13. Barrister's Lounge

Fine leather couches and a mahogany table now covered in a thick layer of dust stand undisturbed around this chamber. Portraits line the walls here with plaques bearing names below, both now obscured with thick cobwebs. A simple iron icebox sits in one corner of the room, a few empty bottles perched precariously atop it.

This is where the barristers and magistrates of Beldrin's Bluff courthouse enjoyed a fine brandy and a cigar.

Clue: Sveth found a jar of formaldehyde with Halgrak's severed toes floating in it at Malgrim's hideout. He brought the jar here and placed it in the icebox. When the jar is revealed, have the PCs make a Sense Motive check. A DC 15 reveals Halgrak's horror and revulsion when he sees the toes. The half-orc did not want to send Mord to his death and held out. Malgrim and some thugs cornered the smith after hours and cut off his toes as a "down payment" on the debts he owed Alastir. They threatened to do the same to his children if he didn't vote to hang Mord. When Halgrak sees his toes it dredges up horrible memories and shame over his involvement in the executioner's mistrial. If Malgrim is still alive the same check reveals the hulking hobgoblin casting an amused leer Halgrak's way.

Vision: This room contains portraits of every magistrate-judge to serve at the courthouse. Silman Trabe is up on the wall as well, his name inscribed below him. As soon as the PC who experienced Vision 1 enters this chamber, his eyes are drawn to the portrait and he experiences the vision, in greater detail. Read or paraphrase the following to him alone.

"Jarbin Mord. For the brutal and savage slaying of your own wife and six-year-old boy, it is the verdict of this jury, with which I concur wholeheartedly, that you shall hang by your neck until dead. May the gods take mercy on your blackened soul."

Silence falls over the courtroom in the wake of this pronouncement of doom. The faces of the assembled crowd grow solemn as everyone feels the finality of the sentence, with a few exceptions. Several members of the assembled jury are smirking at each other. The hobgoblin, halfling, gnome, and young woman all seem both pleased and highly amused by this turn of events.

14. Baliff's Lodgings (EL 2)

This dark, dank room contains only a trio of couches and two large wooden cabinets.

This room is where the bailiffs working at the courthouse kept their quarters.

Creature: One of the bailiffs never left. He stayed behind after Mord's hanging to clean up the courthouse and became the Croaker's first victim. Now he has become a coffer corpse, a hideous emaciated undead with dirty, scraggly hair and no eyes. He still wears his worm-eaten bailiff's uniform and is locked in the second cabinet on the wall. He was forced into the cabinet during a battle with Father Kelgaard and Grisdom Twin-Axe. Grisdom hurled one of his magical axes into the thing's chest and then Father Kelgaard turned it, and they locked it in the closet. If the cabinet is unlocked, read or paraphrase the following.

The doors burst open, casting wooden shards about the room. A wretched corpse of a man gives a hideous cry as it emerges from the cabinet. The faded blue uniform of a bailiff clings to its bony shoulders in rags and a hand axe protrudes from its chest. The corpse's veins and arteries have been pulled out through jagged gashes in its wrists and shoulders and now dangle like leathery marionette's strings. A childlike giggle issues forth in the darkness above and the veins float upward. The bailiff corpse begins to jerk about like a puppet at the whim of some malevolent force. The thing's gaunt face is eyeless, its two gaping sockets fixed on nothingness as it snarls and lurches forward.

BAILIFF COFFER CORPSE

CR 3

CE Medium undead

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Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +4, Spot +5

DEFENSE

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12

(+2 natural)

hp 13 (currently 6, 2d12)

Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +3

DR 5/bludgeoning

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

Melee 2 claws +5 (1d4+4)

Special Attacks death grip, illusory death, improved grab

TACTICS

Before Combat The coffer corpse doesn't move at all until the cabinet is unlocked or opened.

During Combat The coffer corpse creature grabs the first creature it detects and tries to use its death grip attack.

Morale The coffer corpse fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 11, Con —, Int 6, Wis 11, Cha 10

Base Atk +1; Grp +5

Feats Improved Initiative

Skills Hide +5, Intimidate +3, Listen +4, Sense Motive +3, Spot +5

SQ turn resistance +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Improved Grab (Ex) To use this ability, the coffer corpse must hit an opponent of Large size or smaller with both claw attacks. If it gets a hold, it uses its death grip.

Death Grip (Ex) A coffer corpse deals 1d4+4 points of damage per round with a successful grapple check against a Large or smaller creature. Because the coffer corpse grabs the victim's throat, the victim cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components.

Illusory Death (Ex) In any round a coffer corpse is struck for 6 or more points of damage by a single attack, it slumps to the ground as if dead. If it has fastened its death grip on a victim, the victim falls as well, unless he makes DC 12 Reflex save. Even if the save is successful, the coffer corpse does not release its grip but rather slumps against its opponent's body. On its next turn the coffer corpse rises again as if through reanimation. Any creature viewing this must succeed at a DC 10 Will save or become panicked for 2d4 rounds.

Treasure: Grisdom's masterwork throwing axe is still stuck in the bailiff's chest. The first cabinet in this room contains the bailiff's supplies and emergency provisions in case of an attack on the courthouse. Two heavy crossbows rest on a rack with a case of 50 bolts underneath them, and four longswords and four daggers are sheathed here. Four sets of chainmail and light steel shields hang within as well. Eight *potions of cure light wounds* rest in a vial rack here. Five sets of manacles hang on hooks within as well as two tanglefoot bags and two smokesticks.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: Only give the PCs a CR 2 experience award for the bailiff, as he was already wounded when the PCs find him.

15. Public Stocks (EL 3)

This open-air chamber resembles a large cage. On the other side of the bars lies a dug-up

potter's field where the bodies of criminals rest in unmarked graves. Beyond, the wind-blasted desolation of Beldrin's Bluff beckons. Cracked buildings slump against each other in the distance, many already collapsed into piles of rubble. Shadows move between the old stores and dance in the broken maws of their cracked front windows. For a second, a few pairs of red eyes peek out from the inky black, only to be swallowed up again. The cage here is empty save a stocks, where painfully hobbled criminals wallowed to the joy of onlookers, who spent their own frustrations by hurling rotting fruit at the accused. Suddenly, a moaning issues forth from the dug-up graves and bloated rotting fingers reach up and claw toward freedom. Six corpses, nooses draped about their necks, push to their feet and lumber toward the bars, picking up stones as they come.

Creature: The stocks here are animated by Gabe and clacks about, snapping at the PCs.

ANIMATED STOCKS

CR 2

hp 31; MM 13 (Medium animated object)

TACTICS

During Combat The stocks attacks any living creature it detects, grappling and holding fast while the zombies hurl stones.

Morale The stocks fights until destroyed.

ZOMBIES (6)

CR 1/2

hp 16 each; MM 266

Ranged thrown stones —4 (1d2+1)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombies can only reach an opponent within 5 feet of the bars. Otherwise, they clumsily hurl stones at anyone they detect (especially those held fast in the stocks).

Morale The zombies fight until destroyed.

16. Executioner Preparation Room

This windowless chamber contains a stool and a small table. A black hood hangs from a hook on the far wall, with a long length of rope coiled on the floor beneath. A wooden cask also rests in the corner of this room.

This small room is where Jarbin and his predecessors prepared to deliver justice.

Treasure: The cask in the corner contains a 15-year-old batch of Chelaxian Daemon-Spirit (a powerfully strong whisky). The cask contains 6 quarts (each quart is worth 5 gp).

17. Belfry (EL 2)

A salt wind blows through this cold, open-air tower. An old rust-covered bell hangs from rotting wood beams above, obstinate against the wind's caress. The tower offers a rare vantage of Beldrin's Bluff's desolate environs. To the south, the cliff ends abruptly mid-block, a few sagging inns and shops still desperately clutching the edge of the rock. The old Absalom arboretum stands to the west, now an overgrown tangle of wild twisted trees, slithering vines, rank blankets of pulsating mold, and dark recesses from where alien eyes peek and then vanish only to appear elsewhere. The area of the ward beyond the arboretum is flooded with the sea's backwash and old sewer water, and many of the buildings there have surrendered to water-rot. The sea churns in the distance and one lonesome gull cries against the night.

Creature: A hideous undead known as a ghoul-stirge perches above the bell tower. The putrid thing resembles a bird-like humanoid with broken rotting wings and an insectile head. When it detects someone entering the tower it prowls stealthily down the outside and observes whoever is there.

Bolted Entry Hatch: hardness 3, hp 20, break DC 15.

GHOUL-STIRGE

CE Medium undead

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Init +3; Senses Listen +10, Spot +10.

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12

(+3 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 26 (4d12)

Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee bite +5 (1d6 plus paralysis)

Special Attacks blood drain, paralysis

TACTICS

Before Combat The ghoul-stirge waits until only one or two people remain in the tower and cuts them off from their allies by bolting the entry hatch.

During Combat The ghoul-stirge attempts to paralyze its foes so it can take its time feeding.

Morale The ghoul-stirge flees if it deals 6 points of Constitution damage, but otherwise it fights until destroyed.



Ghoul-Stirge

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 17, Con —, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 12

Base Atk +2; Grp +2

Feats Alertness, Weapon Finesse

Skills Hide +7, Listen +10, Spot +10

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Paralysis (Ex) The touch of a ghoul-stirge paralyzes a foe for 1d6+2 minutes. A DC 13 Fortitude save negates the paralysis and elves are immune to this effect.

Blood Drain (Ex) A ghoul-stirge can drain blood from a paralyzed or helpless creature. This attack deals 1d6 points of Constitution damage each round.

18. Attic Apartment (EL 4)

This room is in shambles. A simple double bed is hacked to splinters, the mattress eviscerated of its stuffing and caked in dried blood. No attempt to clean up the slaughter that transpired here was made in the hurried trial of Mord and the flight of all staff from the courthouse. An eerie menagerie of blood-darkened wooden toys in the shapes of carriages, horses, knights,

and wizards are strewn near a dark stain on the floor beneath a broken table.

Creature: When the PCs enter the room, a shadow in the corner stirs ever so slightly, and then a dark woman, her hourglass figure wrapped only in scant red veils, steps forward into the room. Her jet-black eyes stir the soul with desire. As she moves closer, her head slowly splits at the seam of the axe blow that killed her, a slanted chop that opened her skull crosswise from temple to jawbone. A hellish collection of wriggling brain and gurgling fluids spews forth as she dances her Varisian twirl. Her hands now sport gory stumps in lieu of graceful fingers.

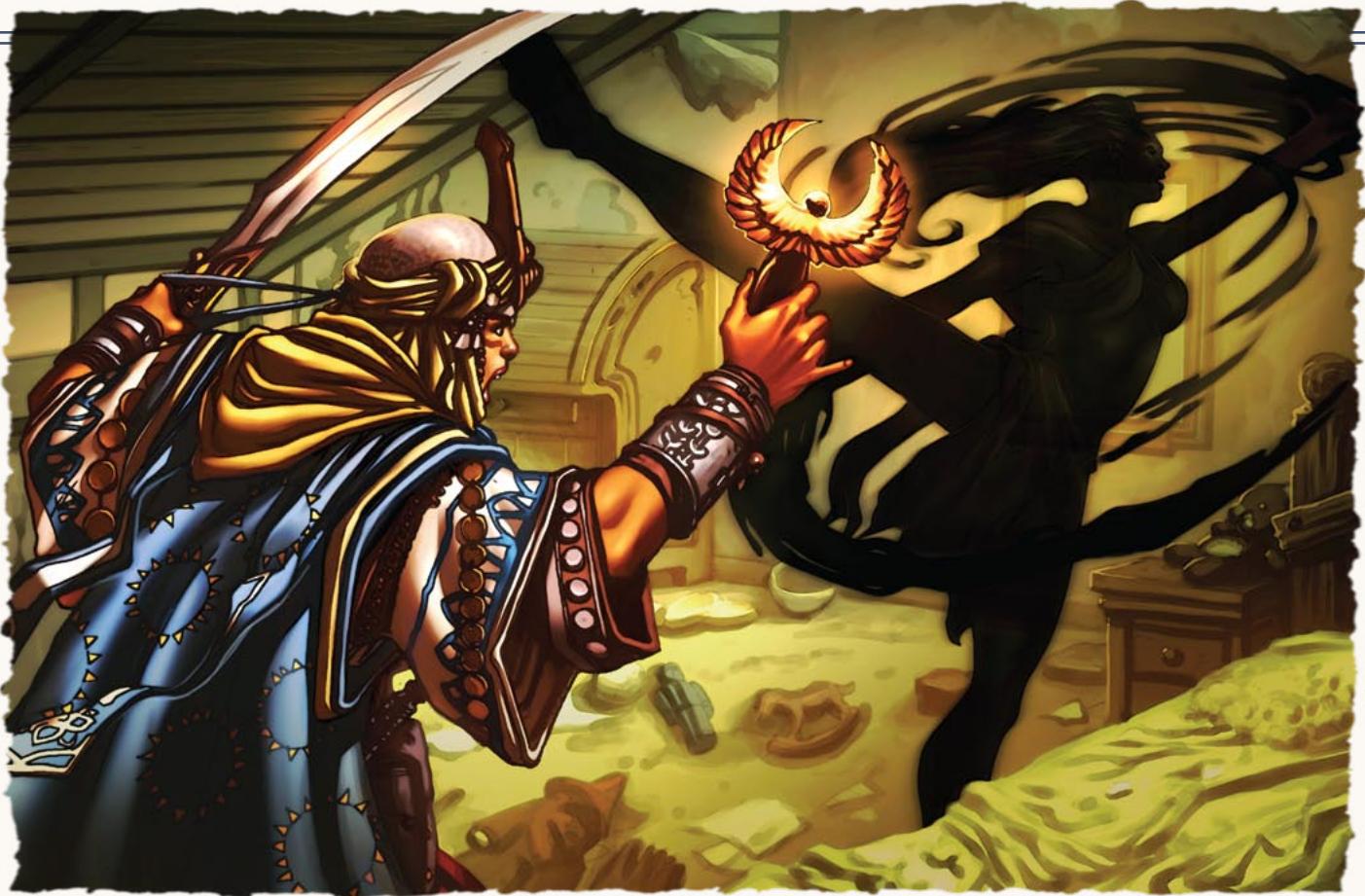
MALENE'S SHADOW

CR 3

hp 19; MM 221 (shadow)

TACTICS

During Combat Malene saps the strength of the hardest-looking opponent first, unless Alastir Wade is present. If Alastir is there, Malene focuses all her attacks on him to the exclusion of any other targets.



Morale Malene wails if reduced to less than 5 hp and retreats through the wall.

ANIMATED WOODEN TOYS (3) CR 1/2
hp 2 each; MM 13 (Tiny animated object)

TACTICS

During Combat The toys do nothing until someone attacks Malene. After that, they attack anyone who molests Gabe's mother's spirit.

Morale The toys fight until destroyed.

Clues: The knitting needle from Vision 4 is present under the bed (DC 15 Search check to find it), still crusted with dried blood. If Alastir is with the PCs (see event 7) when they enter here, the needle animates, flies across the room, and draws a bloody furrow on his other cheek to match the one Malene gave him ten years ago, matting his beard in blood. Afterward, the needle drops, inanimate.

Treasure: The keys to the iron door in the Great Hall (area 1) are on a hook by the door here. Additionally, Mord's meager life savings are hidden in a pouch behind the headboard of the bed (10 gp and 30 sp). Most of Mord's pay went to purchasing fine Varisian silk scarves for his beloved wife. Ten

of these scarves still hang from a rack next to the bed (worth 10 gp each).

Vision: As soon as the PC who experienced Vision 4 enters the room, she experiences an extended vision. Treat her as dazed for the first round of combat. Read or paraphrase the following to her alone.

The terrifying laugh rings in your ears as the cloaked figure raises a fist to strike the woman, still seated in her rocking chair. Before he can strike, however, she stands defiantly and lashes out with her knitting needle. The cloaked figure raises a gloved hand to its cheek. The glove comes away bloody, and then the figure reaches for a wood axe hung above the hearth as the woman recoils in horror.

PART 2: JUDGEMENT OF THE JURORS

The Croaker begins his work in earnest one hour after the PCs begin their investigation, culling the guilty jurors one by one as the PCs look on helplessly, and then sending the NPCs back at the party as tortured undead.

The following events are timed on the hour, although you should feel free to

drop them in at whatever pace you see fit to increase the drama and tension of the adventure. If things are moving too slowly, speed up the pace. If any of the jurors are killed by the PCs before they are set to meet their end at the hands of Jarbin Mord, no matter, although events that call for their reanimation as undead should still occur. For the purposes of the timeline, the adventure starts at 6:00 PM, at sundown.

Event 1. Malgrim's Own Medicine (EL 1)

Time: 7:00 PM

Location: Any.

His large role in Mord's death by hanging aside, the blood of many is on Hurkes's hands. The brutal hobgoblin has garroted the life out of dozens of innocent men and women with his spiked chain. Mord gives him a taste of what it's like. When the time comes for Malgrim's end, the hobgoblin decides to lead the way into the next area the party investigates or, if he detests every party member, he disgustedly leaves them to conduct his own attempts to escape the courthouse. If the former is the case, the door to the area

Malgrim moves into slams shut behind him. Read or paraphrase the following.

A harsh staccato whisper builds to the rasping croak of a strangled man that echoes through the entire courthouse. Malgrim screams frantically over the horrid sound. "No! Get away from me! You're dead! I saw you swing! No!" The jangling of a chain and wet gurgling follow. Then all goes silent.

When the door opens afterward, or the PCs arrive at the scene, they find Malgrim hanging from the rafters by his own spiked chain, quite dead, his blood pooling on the floor beneath his swinging boots.

Aftermath: Malgrim's corpse disappears as soon as the PCs leave it. The hobgoblin reanimates as a horrible zombie at a time of your choosing and besets the party.

ZOMBIE MALGRIM HURKES

Male hobgoblin zombie

NE Medium undead

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15

(+3 armor, +2 Dex, +2 natural)

hp 13 (2d12)

Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +3

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee slam +6 (1d6+5)

TACTICS

During Combat Malgrim is now an undead abomination. He charges toward the closest PC to slam into submission.

Morale Malgrim fights until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1

Base Atk +1; Grp +6

Feats Toughness

SQ single actions only

Gear Grindle-Slash (monogrammed mwk spiked chain; now draped around his rent neck), mwk studded leather

Event 2. Blind Mad Dwarf

Time: 8:00 PM

Location: Any, or The Gallows (area 7) if the party reaches there before 8:00 pm.

Tablark is a stout old dwarf and a well-spring of courage at the adventure's outset. He blusters that he's seen ghosts aplenty and has no fear of "Ole Broke-Neck Mord."

He also assures any panicky PCs that everything will be just fine.

As soon as he first catches sight of the horror Mord has become, however, he claws his own eyes out of his skull. This also marks the first time the PCs see the Croaker unless they breach area 7 before this time. Read or paraphrase the following when this event occurs.

Out of the shadows shambles a tall, hunched figure. The thing's head jerks obscenely to one side atop a discolored broken neck. Its face is obscured by a rotten death shroud, a milky eye peering through one worn hole, half its black-tooth-filled mouth visible through another rent in the fabric. A horrid rasp of air croaking out pain and misery issues from the thing's crushed throat as it reaches for Tablark Hammergrind.

The dwarf moans, a sound like a tortured animal as he drops to his knobby old knees. His hands reach toward his face as if of their own accord and his fingers curl and claw at his eyes. Tablark screams, a high-pitched monstrous sound that cuts the air and warbles on impossibly long, as he leaves large bloody furrows across his face and eyes. The scream turns to mad wild laughter as Tablark rises to his feet and flees.

Aftermath: The dwarf, his mind broken by terror, gibbers like a half-wit child for the rest of the adventure. He flees the room and runs to and fro about the courthouse slamming into walls and doorframes but picking himself up to continue his insane cavort. Eventually, he shows up in the Jury Deliberation Room as one of Patrissa's zombies (see Event 6 below).

Event 3. Rotten Toes (EL 2)

Time: 9:00 PM

Location: Any or area 9 if the party reaches there before 9:00 PM.

Around 9:00 PM, if Halgrak is still in the PCs' presence, he suddenly goes missing. The PCs run across him in the next area they enter. The half-orc, now sapped of his sanity by Mord, sits on the floor idly stitching his pickled toes back on to his right foot with needle and thread. The putrefied digits take root and infect the poor smith with horrid flesh-eating bacteria that kills the half-orc in minutes.

Aftermath: His plague-ridden corpse soon goes missing. The sick disease that

killed Halgrak raises him as a gangrenous ghoul encountered in the Holding Cells when the PCs reach there (see area 9). If the PCs have already breached area 9 by now, have Halgrak turn up the next time they pass through or in any other area you like.

Event 4. Tongue-Tied No More (EL 1/2)

Time: 10:00 PM

Location: Any.

Next, Mord turns his ire on Ebin Blithoddle. The little gnome goes missing shortly after Halgrak (have him flee a combat in fear or just slink off to try and escape on his own), and when the PCs find him at 10:00 PM read or paraphrase the following.

On the floor, Ebin sits rocking feverishly to and fro, facing away from you. His hands are busy at work in front of him, out of sight. The sound of a knife slicing through fresh, wet meat gives way to a wet cough when he convulses slightly. The gnome turns, blood pouring from his grinning mouth. He holds in his right hand his own severed tongue, waving it about like a slapstick.

Driven mad by Mord, Ebin has cut out his tongue and gurgles to death on his own blood, but not before he staggers toward the PCs and slaps them with his tongue a few times, gurgle-gibbering and laughing thickly through the torrent of gore pouring down his throat.

Aftermath: Ebin's body goes missing and returns at some point later. He traipses about in blood-spattered motley, his coxcomb filthy with writhing worms. He waves his severed tongue about madly as he attacks.

DEAD EBIN

CR 1/2

hp 16; MM 266 (kobold zombie)

Ebin has no spear or sling and only slams foes.

TACTICS

During Combat Ebin charges the nearest PC, chortling as he does so.

Morale Ebin fights until destroyed.

Event 5. Father and Daughter Reunited

Time: 11:00 PM

Location: Any or Morgue (area 11) if the PCs arrive there before 11:00 PM.

Madge's part in Mord's death stems from her father's execution. Mord plans to give her what he took away—her father, in all

his dead, putrefied glory. At 11:00 PM, or whenever the PCs reach the Morgue, read or paraphrase the following.

Four lumbering cadavers, three human and one halfling, stumble into view, moaning pitifully as they come. Each one wears a rotting noose around its twisted broken neck. Madge suddenly stops in her tracks and looks at the halfling zombie in the lead. Tears glisten in her eyes and her lips tremble. "Daddy?" She then rushes forward toward the hungry dead with her arms stretched wide to embrace the moldering halfling.

Madge thinks her long-dead father comes to her back from the grave and rushes to his embrace. In her mind, Daben holds her tight, cooing and cradling his beloved daughter as he smoothes her hair and plants warm kisses on her forehead. She cries tears of delusional joy even as her father calmly grips her head and twists it until the echo of her neck snapping resounds off the gallows' walls. She moans out her love for "Daddy" as he wrenches her head free of her body with a wet ripping of sinew and tearing skin. See area 11 for more details.

Aftermath: Madge's body goes missing as well, turning up later in the Jury Deliberation Room with Patrissa Vrakes (see event 6 for details).

Event 6. Jury Tampering (EL 4)

Time: 12:00 midnight

Location: Any.

After dispensing with the above jurors, the Croaker turns his fury on the enchantress, Patrissa. Again, she is separated from the party (although if the PCs have become vigilant by now, feel free to simply have Mord make an appearance and chase her off into one area, the door slamming shut and locking behind them). Patrissa, so fond of manipulating others, is paid back in kind. When her mind cracks under the Croaker's power she guts herself with her dagger and pulls out her intestines. The PCs find her playing in a puddle of her own innards, laughing madly before she dies horribly.

Aftermath: Patrissa's corpse (and her slippery pile of insides) goes missing, but shows up again in the Jury Deliberation Room next time the PCs show up there, although now the enchantress is

CLUES AND THE FLOW OF INFORMATION

An important element of this adventure is the timing of and manner in which information is revealed to the party. When, and how, to let the penny drop is one of the most difficult challenges of any mystery adventure. Dozens of conversations over coffee and flaming threads on the internet are fraught with different perspectives on how to best run a mystery. Some say make it hard for the PCs to figure it out, so they feel like they really achieved something when they do, others tout the "hit them over the head with clue-hammers" approach to ensure the game doesn't stall as the players sit there with befuddled looks on their faces. Both are best. Start out making it hard for the players, but keep your clue-hammers handy. If the party starts to get slowed up by lack of evidence, throw them a bone or two to get them back on track.

There are several means by which the PCs can divulge the mastermind behind the mistrial: Evidence aplenty pointing toward jury tampering is available in Wade's desk in area 12 (as well as evidence of his obsession with Malene). Additionally, the visions experienced by the party contain everything they need to solve the case, really (they know the murderer was struck by a needle across the cheek and looking for a scar turns up Wade, although his beard presents an obstacle). Finally, successfully putting the screws to some of the jurors yields answers as well (although not all of them are aware of who pulled Malgrim and Patrissa's strings). Patrissa survives for a long time and knows Alastir is the man behind Mord's hanging (and she definitely suspects his motivations have something to do with his own hand in the axing of the executioner's family), so she is an invaluable source of information if the PCs can wring her for answers.

Be helpful. If the PCs are lost, throw troubleshooting hints their way lest the investigation get derailed. If all else fails, have Patrissa act suspiciously so they get on to her. The ultimate fail-safe is Sveth. Sveth's goal is to get to the bottom of Mord's family's murder. If the PCs get lost, have the disguised rogue help them out. Again, though, no need to help them too early. Don't make it too easy on the PCs or the adventure will be over before it begins in earnest. In fact, one reason Alastir does not even show up until after midnight is to prevent the PCs from simply solving the mystery right away and avoiding the horror and fun of racing for clues against the ticking timebomb of Mord's murderous rampage. How to time the adventure's clue revelation and increase the tension and drama of the adventure's arc is intrinsic to building up to a powerful climax. The hard work you put into this will pay off huge in dividends of fun for you and the players.

transformed into a disgusting undead called a gutdragging lurcher. Here, all the jurors killed so far are arranged as grim corpse-puppets whose strings are Patrissa's wriggling entrails. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs come through.

There is movement in the dark. Wet squishing noises herald the sight of Patrissa's bloated corpse, her face now a mask of death. The entrails she pulled from her own body writhe and snake with a life of their own. Patrissa's guts flop about the chamber. Sticky tendrils work their way along the tabletop, while others slither up the backs of chairs. The rest of the dead jurors are here as well, seated around the table. Strips of Patrissa's innards have wormed their way into the back of the dead juror's necks or into the base of their spines, the bodies now jerking about wildly in their chairs. Patrissa's face remains impassively

dead, but one serpentine rope of intestine rears up to regard you ominously, and then the bodies rise from their chairs and stumble toward you, as the mass of writhing innards coils to spring your way as well.

Creatures: Eyeless old Tablark and Madge Blossomheart's headless corpses sit in their appointed chairs here along with another old broke-necked victim of Mord. They dance at Patrissa's deranged command, lurching toward the PCs and attacking.

PATRISSA, GUTDRAGGING LURCHER CR 3
hp 32; see Appendix

TACTICS

During Combat Patrissa is content to allow her zombies to do her dirty work for her for the first two rounds of combat, then she assaults the PCs with her stinking entrails.

Morale Patrissa fights until destroyed.

MADGE, ZOMBIE HALFLING

hp 16; MM 266 (kobold zombie)

Madge has no spear or light crossbow and can use only a slam attack.

TACTICS

During Combat Madge approaches whichever PC she was taken with in life and tries to tear his head off. If she succeeds she wears it atop her ruined neck.

Morale If Patrissa is killed, Madge falls inert and does not reanimate. Otherwise, Madge fights until destroyed.

TABLARK AND BROKE-NECK ZOMBIE CR 1/2

hp 16 each; MM 266 (human commoner zombies)

TACTICS

During Combat The zombies charge the PCs, keeping them away from Patrissa.

Morale The zombies fight until they or Patrissa are destroyed.

CR 1/2**Event 7. Dueling Villains (EL 3)****Time:** 12:00 am (midnight)**Location:** The Great Hall (area 1).

Sveth's plans to aid the Croaker's quest for justice are manifold. He drugged the jurors (and PCs) and brought them here, but there were two suspects involved in Mord's mistrial he could not get to: Judge Silman Trabe and Alastir Wade. Fairly certain of their guilt or at least involvement in Mord's dark fate, Sveth forged blackmail letters in both their hands (using samples he obtained in the courthouse). He addressed them to each other, threatening to go to the authorities and expose the other's involvement in the "horrible miscarriage of justice" unless they met "where we did the deed" and brought 1,000 gp along with them. When Trabe read that Alastir planned to expose his complacency in the wrongful hanging he

was terrified. Now an old man with a family to worry about, the judge cannot afford to be locked away—or worse, executed—for his part in the mistrial, and he has no wish to see his sons and daughters dragged through the mire of scandal. Alastir, on the other hand, now a landed bachelor with a long history of horrible crimes, broken hearts and families, and an overinflated sense of self-importance, responded to the letter with cold fury. Well-practiced at deception himself, he recognized the letter for a fake, but decided to show up anyway to root out the true blackmailer and run him through. He also came to realize the old judge is a liability he cannot afford. Even though the letter is a fake, he could not abide allowing the old bastard going senile or crazy and gurgling up the secrets he swore to keep. Alastir has decided Trabe must die and he plans to find whoever sent him the doctored letter and put him to the sword as well.

The judge and former barrister arrive around the same time and meet in the Great Hall (area 1). Alastir wastes no time bandying words with the elderly Trabe and tries to run him through. No slouch with a gentleman's blade himself, Trabe does his best to survive the evil aristocrat's onslaught. No matter where in the courthouse the PCs find themselves, they hear the ring of steel on steel coming from the Great Hall. If they investigate, read or paraphrase the following.

An old man with a sizable paunch staggers backward as he defends himself from a tall, lean opponent with a full beard and a flashing blade to match his intense blue eyes. Their rapiers clang and cast silvery sparks as the tall man adjusts his black top hat gallantly and launches another barrage of thrusts, disengages, and ripostes. The heavier man's silver goatee and drooping moustache drip beads of sweat while his green eyes show terror and strain as he barely turns aside the assault. A final feint on the part of the tall bearded man opens a gash in the fat man's arm. He stumbles backward, turns his ankle with a painful yelp and falls hard on the flagstone floor of the Great Hall.

Creatures: The two men described above are Silman Trabe and Alastir Wade. Trabe is heavy-set, aged, and silver-haired, with a drooping moustache and goatee and wears weariness on his face. Alastir

Judge Trabe

is still as debonair as he was ten years past, although his temples show some distinguished gray. If the PCs do not intervene, Alastir Wade finishes off the troublesome Trabe (tying up a loose end he can no longer afford). Once Wade realizes there are witnesses present he relents his assault and spins a tale about how Trabe threatened to sully his reputation with bald-faced lies concerning the long-closed case of Jarbin Mord. Trabe sputters and claims it is he who is being threatened with lies and produces the letter forged by Sveth. Alastir does the same.

The game is afoot.

Trabe makes a fine red herring. Alastir never intended to pay the blackmail (instead planning to ferret out the true writer of the letter), so he didn't even bring the pay-off gold. Trabe intended to pay Alastir his money in hopes of keeping the whole matter locked up tight and has a thin parcel wherein lay two platinum bars (500 gp each). Alastir points to Trabe's money as a sure sign of his guilt, while claiming he brought no gold, saying, "Why would I pay someone to silence something I had no hand in?" Alastir also does not mention that he figured out the letter is a forgery, hoping to coax the blackmailer into a false sense of security. Alastir carefully scrutinizes the surviving jurors (Rekkart, Sveth, and the PCs), trying to figure out exactly who is behind the letter.

When both Trabe and Wade realize the Croaker is hunting down everyone, they are terrified. Wade does his best to cover up his involvement in the murders by casting suspicion on anyone else who presents themselves (a PC, perhaps, or Sveth). If he sees through Sveth's disguise (by making a Spot check opposed by the alchemist's Disguise check), he outs the rogue and claims he must be behind the whole thing. Alastir does his best to convince anyone on to him that they are wrong or convince everyone else they are lying.

Trabe is the weak link. He knows the truth and he tells all to anyone who makes a DC 20 Diplomacy or Intimidate check.

The visions point to Wade as well, although he tries to hide the mark Malene gave him all those years ago. Alastir has grown a long beard to cover the unsightly scar marring the lower left side of his face

(where Malene slashed him), but close inspection (DC 20 Spot check) reveals the scar beneath his well-trimmed facial hair.

JUDGE SILMAN TRABE

CR 2

Male human expert 3

LE Medium humanoid

Init +0; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
(+4 armor, +1 deflection)

hp 16 (3d6+6)

Fort +4, **Ref** +2, **Will** +5

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk rapier +4 (1d6)

TACTICS

Before Combat Trabe quaffs his *potion of mage armor* and draws his rapier.

During Combat Trabe dodges the most dangerous-looking foe as he battles.

Morale The Judge flees if reduced to 5 hp or fewer.

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 10, **Con** 14, **Int** 15, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 13

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +2

Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge, Weapon Focus (rapier)

Skills Bluff +7, Diplomacy +13, Forgery +5, Gather Information +4, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Profession (magistrate) +7, Sense Motive +7, Use Magic Device +7.

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven

Combat Gear *potion of mage armor* **Other Gear** +1 cloak of resistance, emerald-encrusted pocket watch (300 gp), mwk rapier.

ALASTIR WADE

CR 3

Male human aristocrat 4

LE Medium humanoid

Init +3; **Senses** Listen +4, Spot +4

DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 12
(+2 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 18 (4d8)

Fort +1, **Ref** +4, **Will** +6

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 rapier +7 (1d6+2)

TACTICS

Before Combat Alastir quaffs his *potion of cat's grace* and does his best to manipulate any NPCs to his defense.

During Combat Alastir skewers spellcasters first with his

END GAME STORY AWARDS

Hang Wade: CR 3 experience point award for each PC.

One PC hangs himself to save the rest: CR 1 experience point award for each PC, and CR 3 for the martyr if he is brought back from the dead.

Allow Rekkart to hang himself: 0 xp.

Bring Trabe to Justice: CR 1 experience point award for each PC.



Morale Wade fights to the death rather than face the gallows.

Base Statistics Dex 14, Init +1, AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14, Ref +1, Melee +1 rapier +4 (1d6+2)

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 16

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +4

Feats Negotiator, Persuasive, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +11, Diplomacy +16, Disguise +10, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Listen +4, Perform (oratory) +7, Sense Motive +9, Spot +4.

Languages Common, Elven, Goblin

Combat Gear potion of cat's grace, potion of cure moderate wounds **Other Gear** +2 bracers of armor, noble's outfit, +1 rapier.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

As the list of suspects (and surviving jurors) dwindles, the PCs must deal with the dangerous NPCs such as Vrakes and Alastir Wade, slay the monstrous jurors, and collect enough evidence to damn Wade to the gallows. If they fail to discover Wade is responsible for the crime, there is only one way for any of them to survive the night. Anyone making a DC 15 Knowledge (religion) check learns that the Croaker's torment can be slackened if another soul willingly hangs himself on the same gallows that claimed the ghost's life, on the anniversary of the wrongful death. A PC who reads the note in area 9 gains a +10 circumstance bonus on this

check and may make it untrained. The party must choose someone to hang so the others may live—a surrogate to take on Mord's suffering at the anniversary of his death. This only eases Mord's suffering temporarily, but it frees the survivors from his ghastly clutches for now. The tumbledown courthouse remains a haunted place of dread and murder, and Mord rejuvenates on the following day, but in the meantime the party and any other survivors are free to escape the wretched place.

Of course, Rekkart Cole, who yet lives, proves difficult when the time comes for the PCs to select a "surrogate" for Mord. The misguided paladin believes Mord guilty of the slaying of his family and



has no intention of seeing anyone hanged to appease “a monstrous murderer’s ghost.” The PCs must do their best to convince Cole of Mord’s innocence before he relents. The paladin’s horror at his involvement in an unjust hanging destroys his sense of self and results in him demanding to play the martyr at sunup no matter what the PCs decide. The paladin must be disabled to prevent him from hanging himself.

If no one willingly goes to the gallows and Wade is not hung, the Croaker continues his horrid onslaught, murdering until sunrise. He leaves only Sveth and Cole alive (he enjoys leaving one victim breathing to tell the tale). If the PCs continually disrupt him by

repeatedly defeating him in combat until sunrise (6:00 AM) they make it out with their lives.

If the PCs succeed by discerning Wade is the true culprit and hang the evil ex-barrister, they end the haunting of Beldrin’s Bluff Courthouse for good and earn great notoriety among the populace of Absalom. Additionally, if they wring a confession from Judge Silman Trabe, the city officials owe them a great debt. In this case, the PCs are on their ways to becoming legends themselves and have no doubt bonded through the horrors of the night into a stalwart party of companions ready to tackle other sinister threats of Absalom and the far-flung adventures all across Golarion.

APPENDIX 1 : BELDRIN’S BLUFF

The mysterious Beldrin built his tower on the storm-swept rocky cliffs along the southern shore of the Isle of Kortos, a dazzling masterpiece of architecture with three glorious ivory spires somehow haphazardly balanced on a tiny base, right at the edge of the cliff. Under his influence, the area surrounding his tower grew inexorably to wealth and beauty, becoming a wonderland that attracted curious nobles, opportunistic merchants, and any and all who craved the powerful secrets of Beldrin’s arcane might.

Beldrin’s Bluff, as the area came to be known, became a jewel of Absalom, and even long after the tri-spired tower of



Beldrin crumbled into the sea and the strange benefactor vanished, the area flourished as a paradise outside of the huddled stink and teeming calamity of the rest of the city proper.

Beldrin's Bluff seemed untouchable by catastrophe and impervious to the darker side of city life, but then the earthquake struck, and several blocks of the majestic plateau tumbled into the sea, taking hundreds of revelers and residents with it. The jagged cliffs became a death trap and the people of the bluff fled the seaside splendor of their neighborhood, taking refuge in the reeking innards of Absalom. Panic spread, violence and paranoia clawed the hearts and minds of the survivors, and rumors flared that the tremor was unnatural—caused by a dark wizard or a secret cabal of demon-bowing cultists. Mass hysteria followed in short order, as wild conjectures on how the quake came about and who was responsible infected the bluff. Most people fled the once-idyllic district in fear of their neighbors or dreading another tremor that would claim the rest of the cliffside.

While most of Beldrin's Bluff remains deserted and forlorn, a few areas remain occupied, and extremely dangerous. Here are some examples:

Arboretum Arcanis: This magic crystal dome once contained a wonderland of exotic fruit trees and a thousand blossoms never before seen on the face of Golarion, succored by the sun's rays and magical torrents of nutrient-rich rain pouring down in regular intervals from an arcane cloud of silver that never moved from the sky above. After the earthquake struck, the eternal magic placed here by Beldrin wavered. The cloud turned dark purple-black and caustic gray and yellow rains poured down on the domed arboretum. The beautiful flowers and life-nourishing fruit trees melted away or twisted into horrid parodies of their former majesty. Meanwhile, new things began to grow: black trees with weeping human eyes on the tips of their sickly branches; blood-sap sentinels; fungal molds the size of cattle; and marrow-drinking vines that steal the memories, voices, and bones of any who wander among them. Worse, plants that infest a human cadaver, animating the thing to walk among the living, are rumored to grow here along the sunless lanes. The cater-blossoms mewl in horror

now, surrounded by twisted abominations of nature, and those who brave the crystal dome of the arboretum speak only of terror, pain, and death.

Beldrin's Tower: Legend claims that before his death, Beldrin placed three objects of power in his stronghold, one sequestered in each of his three towers: a candelabra, a horn, and a broken shield. Two of the three towers fell into the surf below the cliffside decades ago: one is sunk in a deep rift a few hundred feet off the coast and the other is submerged right against the base of the cliff and is revealed every night of the full moon at low tide. The third tower still stands on Beldrin's Bluff, cracked and broken but unbowed. The list of Pathfinders who have tried to brave the inner sanctums of these magical strongholds and not returned is several feet long. Dozens of the brightest and bravest adventurers of Absalom have met their end on this fool's quest, and yet

every year others prove eager to waste their lives on it.

The Drownyard: The noble families who moved high up the cliffs to bathe in the splendor of Beldrin's Bluff built this impressive school where their children could be educated by some of Absalom's most noted sages. The Tri-Towers Yard quickly became known as one of the most impressive preparatory schools for young aristocrats and the scions of wealthy families.

When the quake struck, putrid sewer water burst up from the ground inside the Tri-Towers. This foul deluge was tainted with the old death of a long-forgotten necropolis under the cliffs, and a curse came with the flood. The children of the school still live there, but they no longer draw breath. The things they have become still chant nursery rhymes and cavort in the flooded halls, but they feed on the living and haunt the edge of the district in the deepest dark of night. The old school is perilous beyond measure. Still, some



Croaker

suggest great treasures and relics of power lay in the flooded necropolis below the Drownyard, and more than a few bands of adventurers have braved the dead water and the children's evil games in hopes of finding an entrance to the crypts below.

Stinger's Scar: Once known as the Celestial Pleasure Ground, this sprawling park of wondrous attractions brought the wealthy elite of Absalom coming in legions to enjoy its many unimaginable delights. After the earthquake, the buzzing, stinging vermin of the entire area gathered at the Pleasure Ground. Mottled cliff-stingers, blackmead hornets, and scorpion crabs soon infested the center of the park. Dark clouds of fierce blight flies and eye-stealing synwasps descended on the Pleasure Ground, obscuring the center of the park from outside view. The place traded its moniker of Celestial Pleasure Ground for Stinger's Scar, and Absalom's arcane elite continue to speculate aplenty as to the cause or nature of the venomous hordes gathering at this blighted place. Those who bravely venture inside see figures roaming within the deluge of vermin—tall things with long arms ending in five spasming stingers where fingers should be, lurching about among the biting frenzies of millions of deadly insects. They say a faceless husk of a man lives at the heart of Stinger's Scar, calling himself the Scorpion Prince. Rumors of this terror have spread so far and wide that more than a few parents scare their children to sleep with tales of the Scorpion Prince's predations.

APPENDIX 2: NEW MONSTERS

Croaker

An ominous figure, hands bound before him and his head lolling obscenely to one side on a broken neck, hovers forward. His face is obscured by a rotten death shroud, a milky eye peering through one worn hole, half its black-tooth-filled mouth visible through another rent in the fabric. A horrid rasp of air croaking out pain and misery issues from the thing's crushed throat.

CROAKER

Always LE Medium undead (incorporeal)

Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +15,

Spot +15

CR 5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 15
(+5 deflection, +4 Dex)

hp 58 (9d12)

Fort +3, **Ref** +3, **Will** +8

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect)

Melee maddening touch +9

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks hangman's noose, maddening touch

TACTICS

During Combat Most croakers are more interested in uncovering the true culprit of whatever crimes led to their execution or ferreting out those responsible for framing them than of killing innocents. They are not interested in slaying an entire group of foes but prefer hit-and-run tactics in which they gruesomely slay one or two enemies in order to properly motivate survivors to uncover the truth about the events leading to the croaker's death.

Morale Croakers fear nothing and pursue their goals to the bitter end, knowing full well they will rejuvenate if destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 10, **Con** —, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +3; **Grp** +7

Feats Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (touch)

Skills Hide +16, Intimidate +17, Listen +15, Move Silently +16, Spot +15, Use Rope +16.

Languages Common and any it spoke in life

SQ gallows bound, rejuvenation, turn resistance +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Gallows Bound (Su) A croaker is confined to the area surrounding the gallows where it met death. The undead may not travel farther than 1 mile from the site of its hanging and prefers to haunt the building or immediate area in which it met its demise.

Hangman's Noose (Su) A croaker may use *animate rope* at will and may also cause any rope or rope-like object to animate and strangle an opponent with supernatural strength. The rope gains a Strength of 25 and uses the croaker's base attack bonus to grapple a foe. Any foe grappled takes 1d6+7 points of damage per round as her throat is crushed. Escaping the grapple or severing the rope frees the victim. Croakers often hang dead foes from rafters or tree limbs, leaving them on display for others to find.



Designer Notes

YOUR WEAPONS WILL NOT AVAIL YOU

While the PCs can slay many foes in *Hangman's Noose*, the twisted spirit of Mord is not among them. This adventure takes a big nod from Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game, in that battling the Croaker is not the answer to the riddle and the PCs must instead devise a different means of dealing with him. The way this works is that Mord is in no hurry to kill the jurors (and might not even intend to kill the PCs at all unless they fail to discover the identity of his family's killer). This allows this "overly powerful" monster to exist as a threat, menacing PCs and slowly murdering the other jurors as they sit by watching impotently, but without slapping the party with a big ol' TPK.

Maddening Touch (Su) This touch attack deals 1d6 points of Charisma drain and dazes the target for 1 round (DC 15 Will save negates the daze effect only). Any creature reduced to 0 Charisma by the croaker goes completely insane and often kills herself or her former companions.

Rejuvenation (Su) A slain croaker returns to unlife at full hit points at the next sundown. On the anniversary of its wrongful death, a croaker reforms 1 hour after it is reduced to 0 hit points. The only way to destroy a croaker is to bring to light the true offenders responsible for the crime the croaker swung for and expose any malefactors who assisted in framing the croaker or bringing about its wrongful hanging.

ECOLOGY

Environment any land (usually urban)

Organization solitary

Treasure none

Alignment always lawful evil

Advancement 6–14 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment —

There is no more horrid offense to the gods than the hanging of an innocent person. The soul of a man hung for a crime he did not commit cannot go on. It clings

to the world with a burning hate. The stink of its own body's corruption is all it ever knows. This pitiable soul returns as a croaker, an abomination who seeks to put others through the hell inflicted upon it—to strangle by their necks until dead. It persists for eternity unless the true culprits of the crimes for which it swung are brought to justice and punished.

Gutdragging Lurcher

A sound like soaked ropes slapping wetly against the floor heralds this thing's disgusting approach. A corpse slides along the floor, its gut ripped open, a mass of wriggling greasy entrails spilling forth like serpents. The viscera possess an unholy life of their own, pulsating obscenely as they wetly grip doorframes, tables, and anything else to pull the body about, like giant worms dragging their plump meal behind them. The bloated horror ceases its approach. The sloppy intestines seem to sense fresh prey, hovering momentarily before shooting forward with frightening speed.

GUTDRAGGING LURCHER

Always CE Medium undead

Init -1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., entrails; Listen +10, Spot +10

DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14

(-1 Dex, +5 natural)

hp 32 (5d12)

Fort +1, **Ref** +2, **Will** +6

Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

Melee 4 entrails +5 (1d3+2)

Special Attacks choking viscera, improved grab, nauseating appearance

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (20 ft. with entrails)

TACTICS

Before Combat If able, a gutdragging lurcher seeks fresh corpses to animate as puppets and seeks advantageous positioning where its entrails can reach approaching foes but enemies have a hard time counterattacking (around corners or on the other side of a wall with small openings bored through it, boarded windows, or past closed doors under which their entrails can wriggle to attack).

During Combat Gutdragging lurchers employ their entrails to full effect, choking foes on their putrid intestines while ordering corpse puppets to hold them down or pummel them to death.

Morale Gutdragging lurchers fight until destroyed.

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 8, **Con** —, **Int** 10, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 15

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +8

Feats Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (entrails)

Skills Climb +18 (+20 ropes), Listen +10, Spot +10, Use Rope +7.

Languages Common

SQ corpse puppets, turn resistance +2

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Choking Viscera (Ex) A grappled foe

experiences unimaginable horror. The rotting, putrid intestines that wriggle about the gutdragging lurcher push themselves into the enemy's mouth (pulping themselves

through closed teeth even) and pour down the victim's throat to choke her to death.

Anyone grappled by the lurcher must make a DC 14 Fortitude save or take 1d6 points of nonlethal damage. If reduced to below 0 hp, the victim begins to suffocate until the lurcher releases her or she perishes, choking on foulness. The save DC is Strength-based.

Corpse puppets (Su) A lurcher's entrails may

slither down the throat of any fresh corpse it finds (dead no longer than 2 days), animating the body as a zombie under the lurcher's control. One lurcher cannot control more than its Hit Dice worth of zombies at any one time.

Entrails (Ex) A lurcher's entrails may attack



foes up to 20 feet away. In addition, these tentacles “see” just as well as the lurcher and can spot foes around corners. They can also squeeze into small openings or under doors to attack enemies. A lurcher feeds on the viscera of the dead to increase its Hit Dice and reach. For every 3 HD the lurcher has above 5, increase the reach of its entrails by another 10 feet. Old and powerful lurchers often sit within nests of warrens, their disgusting entrails infesting the places and animating corpse puppets to deal with anyone foolish enough to intrude.

Improved Grab (Ex) If a gutdragging lurcher strikes an opponent with its entrails it may immediately initiate a grapple without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it succeeds in grappling the foe it immediately invades her mouth and throat with its choking viscera.

Nauseating Appearance (Ex) Anyone who sees a gutdragging lurcher, or even its wriggling entrails, must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or become nauseated for 1 round. Success on this save renders the foe immune to this lurcher’s appearance for 24 hours. The save DC is Charisma-based.

ECOLOGY

Environment any land

Organization solitary

Treasure standard

Alignment always chaotic evil

Advancement 6–10 HD (Medium), 11–18 HD (Large), 19–26 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment —

The first gutdragging lurcher was no doubt an abomination dreamed up by a sick necromancer who delighted in foulness and rot. Since the creation of this disgusting undead, its taint has spread and now gluttonous humanoids with evil-polluted souls often rise as gutdragging lurchers upon death. A corpulent corpse polluted with evil stirs after death, and its entrails burst free from their fat guts to seek out fresh prey. Lurchers are particularly vile undead who feed on the entrails of the living, often choking their victims to death with their flapping wet tendrils of rotting intestine and then pulling the foe’s guts out through their mouths to add to its wriggling collection of viscera.

Gutdragging lurchers are intelligent foes and some command a sizeable force of corpse puppets. Rumor has it a minor crime lord in Absalom’s Flotsam District, who rules a large subsystem of the sewers there, is actually a lurcher named Vleer.

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Valeros
MALE HUMAN FIGHTER I

ALIGN NG **INIT** +2 **SPEED** 20 ft.

ABILITIES	
I4	STR
I5	DEX
I2	CON
I3	INT
8	WIS
I0	CHA

DEFENSE	
HP 11	
AC 17	
touch 12, flat-footed 15	
Fort +3, Ref +2, Will –1	

Combat Gear alchemist's fire; **Other Gear** backpack, chainmail, longsword, rations (2), shortbow with 20 arrows, shortsword, silk rope, 1 gp

OFFENSE

Melee longsword +4 (1d8+2/19–20)
Melee longsword +2 (1d8+2/19–20)
shortsword +1 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged shortbow +3 (1d6/x3)

SKILLS	
Climb	+2
Intimidate	+4
Ride	+6
Swim	–2

FEATS
Combat Expertise, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Seoni
FEMALE HUMAN SORCERER I

ALIGN LN **INIT** +2 **SPEED** 30 ft.

ABILITIES	
8	STR
I4	DEX
I2	CON
I0	INT
I3	WIS
I5	CHA

DEFENSE	
HP 5	
AC 12	
touch 12, flat-footed 10	
Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +3	

Combat Gear smokestick, tanglefoot bag; **Other Gear** backpack, dagger, quarterstaff, rations (4), sunrod (5), 27 gp

OFFENSE

Melee quarterstaff –1 (1d6–1)
Ranged dagger +2 (1d4–1)
Spells Known (CL 1st, +2 ranged touch):
1st (4/day)—mage armor, magic missile
0 (5/day)—acid splash, detect magic, daze (DC 12), read magic

SKILLS	
Bluff	+6
Concentration	+8
Spellcraft	+4

FEATS
Dodge, Skill Focus (Concentration)

Kyra
FEMALE HUMAN CLERIC I

ALIGN NG **INIT** –1 **SPEED** 20 ft.

ABILITIES	
I3	STR
8	DEX
I4	CON
I0	INT
I5	WIS
I2	CHA

DEFENSE	
HP 10	
AC 16	
touch 9, flat-footed 16	
Fort +4, Ref –1, Will +6	

OFFENSE

Melee scimitar +1 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged lt crossbow –1 (1d8/19–20)
Special Attacks greater turning 1/day, turn undead 4/day (+1, 2d6+2)
Spells Prepared (CL 1st):
1st—bless, cure light wounds*, shield of faith
0—detect magic, light, read magic
* domain spell (healing, sun)

SKILLS	
Concentration	+6
Heal	+6
Knowledge (religion)	+4

FEATS
Iron Will, Martial Weapon Proficiency (scimitar)

Gear backpack, chain shirt, heavy wooden shield, light crossbow with 10 bolts, rations (6), scimitar, silver holy symbol, 12 gp

Merisiel
FEMALE ELF ROGUE I

ALIGN CN **INIT** +3 **SPEED** 30 ft.

ABILITIES	
I2	STR
I7	DEX
I2	CON
8	INT
I3	WIS
I0	CHA

DEFENSE	
HP 7	
AC 16	
touch 13, flat-footed 13	
Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1 (+2 vs enchantment)	
Immune sleep	

OFFENSE

Melee rapier +1 (1d6+1/18–20)
Ranged dagger +3 (1d4+1/19–20)
Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

SKILLS	
Balance	+5
Climb	+3
Disable Device	+3
Hide	+7
Jump	+3
Listen	+5
Move Silently	+7
Search	+3
Spot	+5
Tumble	+7

FEATS
Dodge

Combat Gear acid, alchemist's fire (2), thunderstone; **Other Gear** backpack, daggers (6), grappling hook, hooded lantern, leather armor, oil (5), rapier, rations (3), silk rope, thieves' tools, 25 gp



Beldrin's Bluff

THE DEAD WILL HAVE THEIR REVENGE

GameMastery Module

U2: Hangman's Noose

Ten years to the day after the most horrible injustice in Absalom's history, an implacable spirit returns to have his vengeance upon those who sent him to the gallows. Unfortunately for the heroes, they are among the jury of the damned, and come dawn they will all hang if they fail to find the true culprit.

Hangman's Noose is an urban-based adventure for 1st-level characters compatible with the world's most popular fantasy roleplaying game. This adventure includes details on the terrible crime, those who took part in its cover-up, and the crumbling courthouse where the crime, trial, and execution all took place.

This adventure is set in the metropolis of Absalom, one of the largest cities in the **PATHFINDER CHRONICLES™** campaign setting, but it can be easily adapted for use in any setting. For more information on this city, check out *U1: Gallery of Evil* and the *Pathfinder Chronicles Gazetteer*.

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